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ABSTRACT

"Marketing Folk Art" is a special section (pages 43-89) of this serial issue addressing the folklorists' role in developing marketing strategies to improve the lot of folk artists and protect their traditional forms of expression from commercial exploitation. The following six articles, introduced by Rosemary Joyce, focus on these topics: (1) "The Marketing of Objects in the Folk Art Style" (C. Kurt Dewhurst; Marsha MacDowell); (2) "Traditions for Sale: Marketing Mechanisms for Baltimore's Screen Art, 1913-1983" (Elaine Eff); (3) "Who Will Market the Folk Arts?" (Egle Victoria Zygas); (4) "'Crafts Assistance Programs' and Traditional Crafts" (Robert T. Teske); (5) "Commentary" (Geraldine N. Johnson; John Michael Vlach); and (6) "Mitigating Marketing: A Window of Opportunity for Applied Folklorists" (Alf Walle). (MM)

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NEW YORK FOLKLORE

Marketing Folk Art

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NEW YORK FOLKLORE

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NEW YORK FOLKLORE

The Journal of the New York Folklore Society
Phillips Stevens, Jr., Editor

MARKETING FOLK ART

Vol. XII, Nos. 1-2
Winter-Spring, 1986

Cover photo: Screen artist Tom Lipka displays his work at the Highlandtown Harvest Festival, Baltimore, MD, 1982. Photo by Elaine Eff.

NEW YORK FOLKLORE

Vol. XII, Nos. 1-2, 1986
Marketing Folk Art

CONTENTS

Editor's Preface		iv
Religious Symbols in Afro-American Folk Arts	Maude S. Wahlman	1
Marketing the Art of Migrant Laborers	Mary Arnold Twining	23
Special Section, "Marketing Folk Art" Introduction by the Guest Editor	Rosemary O. Joyce	43
The Marketing of Objects in the Folk Art Style	C. Kurt Dewhurst and Marsha MacDowell	49
Traditions for Sale: Marketing Mechanisms for Baltimore's Screen Art, 1913-1983	Elaine Eff	57
Who Will Market the Folk Arts?	Egle Victoria Žygas	69
Crafts Assistance Programs and Traditional Crafts	Robert E. Teske	75
Commentary	Geraldine N. Johnson	85
	John Michael Vlach	88
Mitigating Marketing: A Window of Opportunity for Applied Folklorists	Alf Walle	91
Review: *Religious Folk Art in America* (Dewhurst & MacDowell, Museum of American Folk Art)	Varick A. Chittenden	113
Contributors to this Issue		119

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Editor's Preface

Folklorists and anthropologists have been pained witnesses to the declining quality of traditional arts, and the exploitative treatment of traditional artists, in many areas of the world, resulting from skyrocketing demand for "primitive art" among the industrial nations and the efforts of commercial marketing interests to cash in on that demand. Recently the appetite for the exotic has turned inward as art collectors and interior decorators have "discovered" traditions of folk art within their own borders. And today good quality folk art fetches very high prices, and new objects in "folk art style" are being aggressively marketed, and reflective academics are once again despairing at the corruption of purity.

But not all folklorists are accepting the new trends passively. A central theme of this important special issue of our journal can be expressed in this question: What role can folklorists play in developing marketing strategies that will at once improve the lot of folk artists *and* protect their traditional forms of expression from commercial exploitation? Phrasing the question in this way implies fundamental premises which have been unacceptable to many folklorists; namely, that the marketing of folk art should be developed, and that they should be involved in it. To many, the question is self-contradictory. To all, it demands a new look at the concept of "tradition."

But there is a growing number of "applied" or "public sector folklorists" to whom the question is correct, vital, and immediate. Some of the thoughts of several such persons are represented here. The nucleus of this volume is the Special Section organized and introduced by Rosemary Joyce. Complementing this are contributions by other distinguished researchers. Maude Wahlman's comprehensive and incredibly full survey of the origins and meanings of religious symbols in Afro-American folk arts demonstrates the richness of just one of our folk traditions, and the potential role of the folklorist in documenting and interpreting it. Mary Twining discusses an experiment in instituting a program of folk art among migrant laborers, who constitute a little-recognized American cultural resource, and many of whom come from the same traditions Wahlman describes. Alf Walle, uniquely qualified as a folklorist in the marketing department of a business school, offers some practical advice from an inside perspective. The volume concludes with a review by Varick Chittenden of Kurt Dewhurst and Marsha MacDowell's comprehensive catalogue, *Religious Folk Art in America*, written to accompany a major exhibition mounted in 1984 by the Museum of American Folk Art.

This is a significant volume. We are grateful to all who contributed to it; and especially to the Folk Arts Division of the New York State Council on the Arts for a grant in support of publication.

NEW YORK FOLKLORE
Vol. XII, Nos. 1-2, 1986

Religious Symbols in Afro-American Folk Art

MAUDE SOUTHWELL WAHLMAN

Most Afro-Americans came from West and Central Africa, between 1650 and 1850.[1] Their influence on the history of music, dance, and speech in the Caribbean and the United States has long been documented.[2] Their influence on American folk arts is less well known.[3] Yet it is possible to trace Afro-American innovations as they adapted African techniques, aesthetic traditions, and religious symbols to the needs and resources of a New World (Thompson 1983).

In order to understand and decode Afro-American folk arts, it helps to understand the creolizing process whereby several cultural traditions are merged to produce unique examples of a new art tradition. Afro-American art resulted from creolizations of various African, American Indian, and European traditions which took place in Brazil, Suriname, Haiti, Cuba, other Caribbean islands, Mexico and the U.S. South.

Analysis of most Afro-American arts reveals a cultural strategy of sorting African heritages into luxuries to be jettisoned and essential intellectual tools with which to comprehend a new world. Protective religious ideas, encoded into folk arts, were intellectual tools of survival. Two significant religious concepts which had profound influences on traditional Afro-American arts (folk arts) are *religious writing* and *healing charms*. However, because folk arts are passed from one generation to the next by example, and often without verbal explanations for the religious significance of forms, many Afro-Americans are unaware of the historical significance of their arts. Thus the importance of Afro-American arts can best be understood and explained if one examines these folk arts from a historical perspective.

Protective Religious Writing

In Africa, among the Mande, Fon, Ejagham, Kongo peoples, indigenous writing was associated with knowledge, power, and intelligence, and thus was considered sacred and protective. In West Africa, Mande peoples encased pieces of religious writing, indigenous and Islamic, in leather charms, for protection, and women dyed cloth (called *Bogolanfini*) with protective designs. In Benin, the Fon People painted religious signs on the ground. In Nigeria, the Ejagham people are known for their 400-year old writing system called *Nsibidi* (Talbot

1912). It was most likely invented by women since one sees it on their secret society buildings, metal fans, calabashes, and cloth, and costumes made for men.

Central African peoples, influenced by the religion of the Kongo people, practiced a healing, curing religion, promoted by priests who used symbolic art forms related to the Kongo cosmogram, a circle with four points representing birth, life, death, and rebirth in the world of the ancestors, under the sea (Fig. 1).[3] The top of the circle can be considered the noontime of life, the peak of power and potential. Its opposite, the midnight sun at the bottom, represents the power and position of the ancestors below the sea. To the left is the position of dusk, death, and transition from the land of the living to the watery world of the ancestors. To the right is the position of the rising sun, or

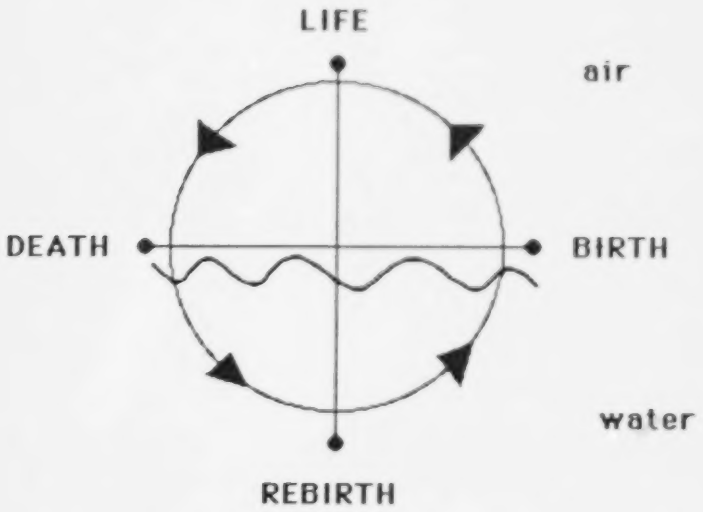

Figure 1.
Kongo Cosmogram, representing Kongo religious beliefs in birth, life, death, and rebirth.

birth. The horizontal axis represents the transition between air and water. Kongo priests drew the cosmogram on the earth, and central African artifacts were read as aspects of this Kongo religious sign. Conjuring canes symbolized the important vertical link between the living and their ancestors. Priests twirled canes to conjure the power of the ancestors to cure and protect. Bottles, ceramic containers, and shells are references to the watery world of the Kongo ancestors, and thus were found on Kongo graves.

Afro-American scripts are creolized arts with roots in Mali, Benin, Nigeria, Zaire, and Angola. Haitian *Vevé* are derived from a mixture of Fon (West Africa) and Kongo (Central Africa) ritual ground painting traditions. People from these societies were taken to Haiti in the 17th and 18th centuries, and gradually their religions and their graphic forms merged. Also Brazilian signs (*Pontos*), Suriname *Ataka* script, and Cuban *Anaforuana* are derived from various mixtures of West African and Nigerian signs (*Nsibidi*) and the Kongo cosmogram (Thompson 1983).

Afro-American signs are found embroidered onto textiles, carved into wooden objects, sequinned onto flags (Fig. 2), coded in ceremonial costumes, drawn on the ground and on buildings, in drawings (Fig. 3), in paintings, on quilt tops (Fig. 4), appliquéd in cloth, and incorporated in graves and other sculptural forms, including charms. In Zaire and in Haiti, the Kongo cross and the Christian cross fused, thus carrying double meanings. In Haiti the conjuring cane reappears, twirled by the leader of a Mardi Gras band, to conjur the spirits. In the United States, the conjuring cane takes two forms: the twirled baton of the cheerleader, and the Afro-American walking stick carved with watery animals (messengers from the ancestors) as in Zaire. In Nigeria and Suriname, when asked the meaning of secret written symbols, people give the superificial interpretations associated with courtship, love, and sex. Scholars are only recently discovering the deeper religious meanings associated with these signs. Traditionally, Africans revealed these deeper meanings only to those who earned the title of elder (Thompson 1977-80).

Writing continued to have protective symbolism in Afro-American culture, even when the writing was in English. In the United States newsprint was placed on the walls of Southern homes, and into shoes as well, to protect against the elements or evil enslaving spirits, in the belief that "evil spirits would have to stop and read the words of each chopped up column" before they could do any harm (Bass 1973:393). Dr. Trudier Harris (1984) tells me this concept derives from the Afro-American practice of leaving a Bible open at night so that the power of religious words would protect a family against nighttime evil. One also sees vestiges of Afro-American protective writing traditions in Afro-American folk arts. For example, busy Afro-

Figure 2.
Vodun *flag, 1984 from Haiti.*
Vodun *flags continue the Yoruba tradition of headwork, as well as African traditions for incorporating script in textiles. Two* Vodun *flags are touched to open a* Vodun *ceremony in Haiti.*
Photo by Bill Martin.

Figure 3.
Painted Page, 1984 by J. B. Murray, GA.
Murray's art implies the survival of African and Afro-Caribbean scripts in Afro-American folk arts. Reduced to abstract designs, the script may be a semi-conscious reference to Haitian Veve *which Murray saw as a child.*
Photo by Bill Martin.

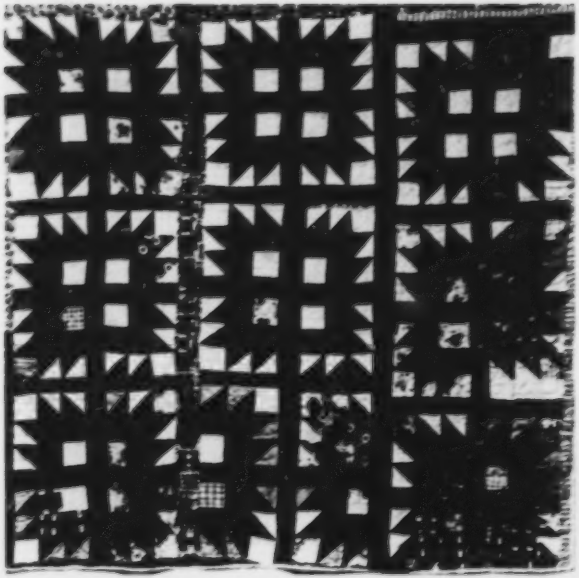

Figure 4.
Cotton Leaf Quilt, 1979 by Lucinda Toomer, GA.
This quilt shows a possible survival of the Kongo cross in Afro-American textiles.
Photo by Bill Martin.

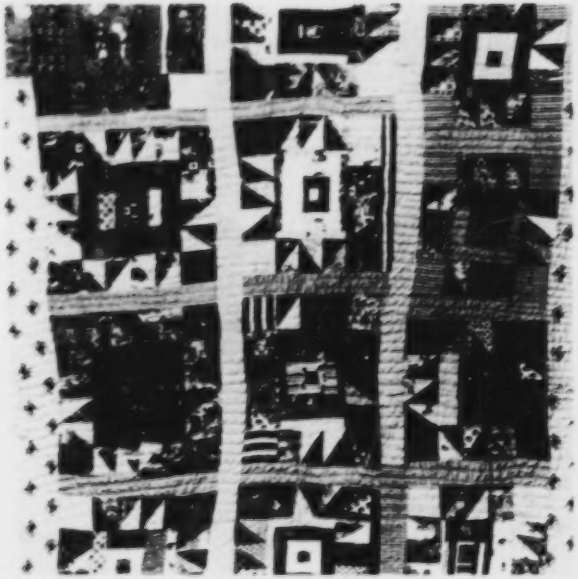

Figure 5.
Block Quilt, 1982 by Pecolia Warner, MS.
This quilt illustrates multiple patterning in Afro-American folk art — both as aesthetic and a protective tradition.
Photo by Bill Martin.

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American quilts are protective in the same sense as newpapered walls, with their hard to read, asymmetrical designs (Fig. 5) and multiple patterns (Thompson, 1983:221). Afro-American artists such as Bill Traylor and Nellie Mae Rowe (Fig. 6) use *Vèvè*-like designs.

Charms

Two types of African curing or protective charms reappear in the New World. One type, from West Africa, involves a small square packet, often of red leather, enclosing script. The second type, from Central Africa, the Kongo *Minkisi*, or the medicines of God (healing charms) appears in numerous forms.

When these concepts were remembered in the New World, they took different forms and different meanings, partly because ideas from West and Central Africa fused and then further creolized with American Indian and European ideas, and because of new cultural environments. African religious concepts came with Africans to Haiti, where several African religions fused into the *Vodun* religion. After Haitian independence in 1804, many free Africans came to New Orleans, and the *Vodun* religion spread throughout the South.

In West Africa, leather charms enclosing script are worn around the neck and on hunting and religious costumes, as protection against evil. In Brazil one finds variations on this theme; one example has writing on the outside, on red plastic film covering styrofoam (Thompson 1981).

The Afro-American term "Hand" is another word for "Mojo," a cloth charm which fuses West African and Central African charm concepts. The Afro-American term "Mojo" refers to a hex or spell, the medicine to cure someone, and the charm or amulet used to cure a spell or protect one from evil forces, as in the song "Got My Mojo Working," popularized by blues singer Muddy Waters, and often sung by James Ford Thomas.[6]

I went down to Louisiana, I got me a mojo hen.
I'm going to teach my woman, How to treat her man
  refrain:
  I got my mojo working, But it won't work on you.
  I want to love you so bad, baby, I don't know what to do.
I got my black cat bone, And it's pure and dry
I got a four-leaf clover 'Bout to make me cry.
  (refrain)
I'm going to sprinkle goober dust, All around your bed.
I got some black snake roots, Going to put them under your bed.
  (refrain)
I got a Gypsy woman Giving me advice.
I got such red hot tips, I have to keep them on ice.

[6]

Figure 6.

Painting of a Man, by Nellie Mae Rowe, GA.
The vegetation in Rowe's paintings is similar to Haitian **Veve** *or ceremonial writing. The central figure is this painting may refer to the Haitian god of death, Baron Samedi, or to a zombie, a person whose soul is not worthy of rebirth and thus must live as a lost soul wandering around grave yards. It may also refer to an Afro-American priest or conjure man.*

Photo by Bill Martin.

(refrain)

Concerning a "Hand," Zora Neal Hurston (1931:414) wrote:

> "Take a piece of the fig leaf, sycamore bark, John de Conquer root, John de Conquer vine, three paradise seeds. Take a piece of paper and draw a square and let the party write his wishes. Begin, 'I want to be successful in all my undertakings.' Then cut the paper from around the square and let him tear it up fine and throw it in front of the business place or house or wherever he wants. Put the square in the 'hand' and sew all up in red flannel. Sew with a strong thread and when seams are closed, pass the thread back and forth through the bag 'til all the thread is used up. To pour on 'hand:' oil of anise, oil of rose geranium, violet perfume, oil of lavender, verbena, bay rum. 'Hand' must be renewed every six months."

In Zaire, the second type of charm, the Kongo *Minkisi*, or the medicines of God, are activated by the power of the ancestors. The earliest Kongo charms were ceramic vessels with liquid medicines (Jansen and McGaffey 1974:37). Later versions encapsulated symbolic medicines — references to the watery world of the ancestors and things whose names were puns for verbs of action. One type, in cloth, usually red, was tied at the neck, with feathers at the top (Thompson 1983: plate 72). A Kongo ceremonial cloth hat is decorated with three protective *Minkisi*. (Fig. 7). Another type of charm, in wood and often of human shape, had a hollow in the center for the magical substances. This cavity was sealed with glass, a shell, mica, or a mirror, all references to the watery land of their ancestors.

The ultimate charm was the mummy of a dead king, enclosed in red blankets, and often decorated with the cosmogram sign (Thompson 1981:63-71). Traditional Kongo area graves are also forms of *Minkisi*, with magical substances inside and outside, to insure the safe journey of the deceased soul to the Kongo realm of the ancestors below the sea, and to protect the dead against evil spirits. These graves are decorated with references to this watery realm, with shells, containers, white ceramics, glass, etc. and bottles and plates were placed in nearby trees to ward off evil spirits with their flash of glass or white porcelain.

Charms (*Minkisi*) were activated by reciting verbs of action, to conjure the power that the ancestors had to make the charms work. Important charms were sometimes set upon a cosmogram drawn on the earth (Thompson 1981:151). Certain Kongo priests decorate the walls of their shrines with charms and ideographic signs in order to stop and neutralize negative forces (Thompson 1977-80).

In the New World one finds numerous references to Kongo charm concepts. In Cuba one finds new interpretations of *Minkisi* pots, some

Figure 7.
Kongo Ceremonial Hat with Three Protective Minkisi *Charms from Zaire.*
Minkisi, *or the medicines of God, enclose magical substances which refer to verbs of action, powerful ingredients, or symbolic forms.*
Photo by Bill Martin.

Figure 8.
Cloth Charm (Pacquet Kongo) *from Haiti.*
The Afro-Haitian Pacquet Kongo *illustrates the survival of the Kongo curing charm of* Minkisi *in the new world. In New Orleans this idea reappears as a* Vodun *doll.*
Photo by Bill Martin.

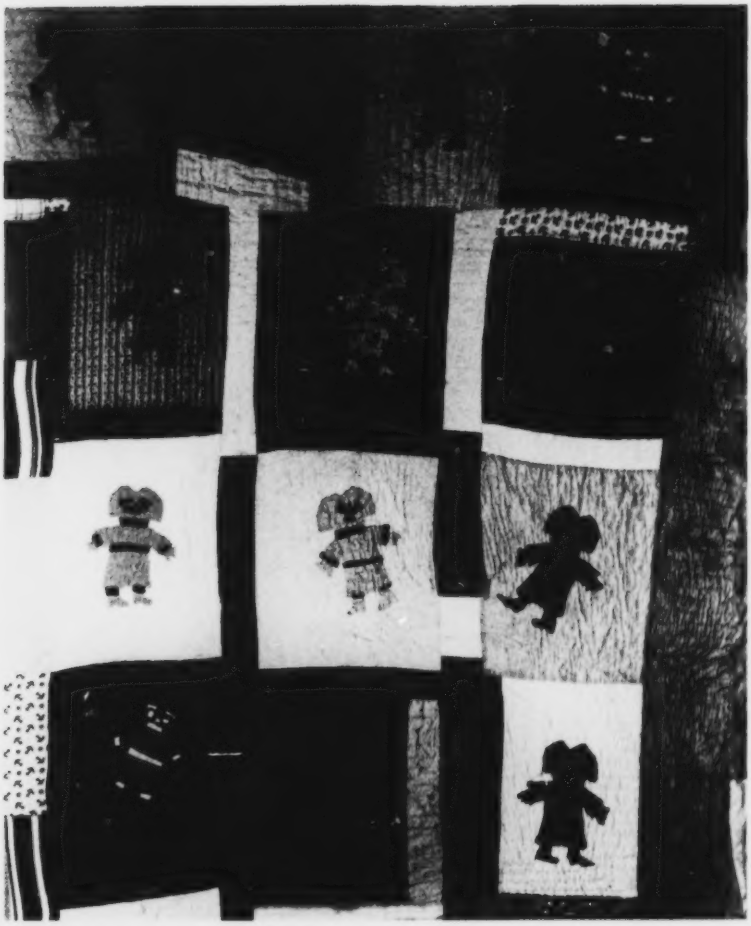

Figure 9.
"Dolly Dingle" Quilt, 1981 by Pearlie Posey, MS.
Quilts with appliquéd figures, often red, imply the survival of the form, if not the idea, of the Vodun *doll, in Afro-American textiles.*

Photo by Bill Martin.

with graphic signs and magical contents (Thompson 1984: plate 71). The Kongo cloth charm concept was carried to Haiti where it is still very much alive in the form of *Paquet Congo* (Fig. 8), small charms enclosed in cloth, now with arms, beads around the neck, ribbons, and sequins (Thompson 1983:31). Some have earrings, or lace ruffles, and are meant to represent female spirits (Thompson 1983:36). In Haiti one also finds allusions to *Mbaka*, little red men thought to be messengers from the dead among the Kongo (Herskovits 1971:239-244). They look like miniature Kongo mummies; one sees them in Haitian paintings such as Engverrand Gourge's "the Magic Table" (Rodman 1973:76), and in Haiti and Cuba they are called *Baka*.

In the United States, the two red human forms take the shape of *Vodun* dolls. Often they are made with pins to activate them, just as wooden charms are activated by nails in Zaire. The painters Nellie Mae Rowe and Lizzie Wilkerson both made dolls with red arms and legs although neither woman would explain why she used red cloth (Jones 1984). The memory of *Vodun* dolls may have been lost but the form continued. Quilters piece quilts with little red squares all over them, and they appliqué hands and red men and dolls (Fig. 9) on quilts and pillows. Some even put empty balls or padded, pleated shells of silk-like materials (Fig. 10) on quilt tops!

Aspects of the Kongo-inspired system of protective charms also survive in Afro-American painting and sculpture. The sculptor and Blues musician James Ford Thomas makes clay skull containers (Fig. 13). His art continues the tradition of the original Kongo ceramic medicinal containers as well as the later wooden charm with a human face. Anonymous and seemingly innocent household objects, like an Afro-American sewing box from North Carolina (Fig. 11), also incorporates references to the Kongo watery world, with its added beads, shells, and water worn pebbles, all surrounding a stuffed center, made as a pin cushion, but also an allusion to the nails put into wooden Kongo charms to activate them.

The Afro-American painter, Nellie Mae Rowe, made gum sculptures with beads, and drew hands in many of her paintings (Rowe, 1981). Afro-American bottle trees are also a type of charm, incorporating ideas about glass, medicine containers, and the vertical link between the living and the ancestors. The bottle art of folk sculptor James Hampton draws on these traditions. Glass jars and light bulbs wrapped in tinfoil were on the tombs in and around Elloree, where Hampton came from (Thompson 1984:147). But let us examine more fully the dynamic symbols used by specific Afro-American folk artists.

Afro-American Quilting

The visual equivalent of jazz or blues — rich with color and

Figure 10.
Shell Quilt, 1979 by Arester Earl, GA.
This textile illustrates the survival of various Kongo religious beliefs in the new world: 1) The concept of cloth Minkisi, *or the medicines of God; 2) The use of shells to represent the under-water realm of Kongo ancestral powers; and 3) The Kongo cross or cosmogram representing birth, life, death and rebirth.*
Photo by Bill Martin.

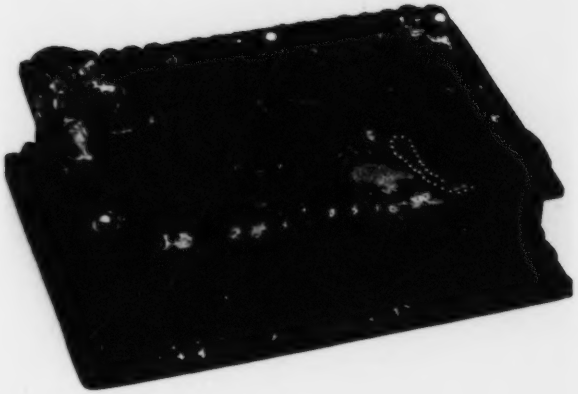

Figure 11.
Afro-American Box, North Carolina, circa 1920.
This sewing box features a stuffed cloth center, like an Nkisi, *and is decorated with shells, pearls, and water worn rocks — all references to a Kongo world of the ancestors under the sea.*
Photo by Bill Martin.

symbolism — describes Afro-American quilts (see Wahlman 1983). Characterized by *strips, bright colors, large designs, asymmetry, multiple patterns, improvisations, and symbolic forms,* Afro-American quilts have their roots in African textile techniques and cultural traditions. The antecedents of contemporary African textiles and Afro-American quilts developed in Africa perhaps a thousand years ago.

Like Anglo-American quilt tops, Afro-American quilt tops are made either by sewing pieces together (*piecing*) or by sewing cut-out shapes onto larger fabric (*appliqué*). Quilt tops are sewn to an inner padding and a bottom cloth (*quilting*). All these techniques (piecing, appliqué, and quilting) were known in Africa, Europe, and in the United States, yet Afro-American quilts are profoundly different from European or Anglo-American quilts.

In Africa, strips of woven cloth are sewn together to make larger textiles, and cut-out cloth shapes are sewn together to create complicated designs on ceremonial costumes and funerary banners. Appliqué techniques are used in sewing large cut-out shapes onto costumes, wall hangings, flags, umbrellas, and funerary hangings. Quilting is seen in ancient Egyptian robes, in 19th century cloth armor to protect horses and cavalrymen, and in protective charms of cloth and leather. African cloth also has social and political significance, for it is worn and displayed as an indicator of wealth, occupation, social status, and history. African, Afro-Caribbean, and Afro-American textiles are akin beyond a similarity of techniques. Strips, text-like textiles, charms, and colors often also have protective connotations.

Black men and women remembered African textile techniques and traditions when they came to the New World. They mixed and sorted their own traditions, then combined them with Euro-American and American Indian textile ideas to create unique creolized arts. Their combined ideas were passed down from generation to generation, thus unknowingly preserving many African textile traditions. In Brazil, men continued to weave cloth in a West African manner; in Suriname, Maroon women continued to sew together strips of (imported plaid) cloth into capes for their lovers, while coastal Black women made quilts and pieced costumes; in Cuba, members of the secret Leopard Society pieced checked costumes; Afro-Haitians made strip clothing, sequined flags, Mardi Gras costumes, and cloth charms (Fig. 8); and in the United States, Afro-Americans also made strip clothing, Mardi Gras costumes, cloth charms, and unique Afro-American quilts (Thompson 1983).

Afro-American quilts emphasize *strips* because the first African women to come to the United States would have remembered West African cloth. For centuries in West Africa most cloth has been constructed from strips woven on small portable men's looms. The long narrow strips are sewn together into larger fabrics usually worn

as clothing. Afro-American quilters speak of "strip quilts," "to strip a quilt," and of how strips bring out the design. Whether made from single pieces or small scraps of cloth, the strips are apparent in most quilt designs. Strips are sometimes used in Anglo-American quilts, but as one of many geometric patterns. In West Africa textiles, and in Afro-American quilts, strips are a dominant design element as well as a chief construction technique.

Bold colors and large designs are part of the Afro-American textile aesthetic, possibly due to memories of the communicative function of clothing in Africa. The strong contrasting colors characteristic of African textiles are necessary to insure a cloth's readability at a distance and in strong sunlight. Similar brilliant colors are found in Afro-American quilts although the function has become aesthetic rather than communicative (Fig. 4).

Multiple patterning is another characteristic shared by African and Caribbean textiles and Afro-American quilts. Multiple patterns are important in Africa royal and priestly fabrics, for the number and complexity of patterns in a fabric increase in accordance with the owner's status. Cloth woven for kings or priests may include strips with various woven patterns, as well as many strips each featuring a different repeating pattern. Multiple patterned cloth communicates the prestige, power and wealth of the wearer. Contemporary Afro-American quilts do not communicate the owner's status or a religious identification, but they do retain this African aesthetic tradition of multiplying patterns (Fig. 5).

In West Africa, when woven strips with many patterns are sewn together to make a larger fabric, the resulting cloth has *asymmetrical and unpredictable designs*. These characteristics are retained in Afro-American quilts, for lines, designs, and colors do not match up, but vary with a persistence that goes beyond a possible lack of cloth in any color or pattern. Robert Farris Thompson (1983:221) has suggested that asymmetrical and multiple-patterned strip cloths in West Africa have more than aesthetic function -- the complex designs serve to keep evil spirits away, as "evil travels in straight lines."

Afro-American quilters took this tradition one step further, by introducing improvisation. Black quilters often adapt traditional Euro-American quilt patterns, and "Afro-Americanize" them by establishing a pattern in one square and varying it in successive squares (Fig. 4). Typical Afro-American quilt squares do not repeat, but change in size, arrangement, and color. While ostensibly reproducing Euro-American patterns, through improvisation Afro-American quilters maintain African principles of multiple patterning, asymmetry, and unpredictable rhythms and tensions similar to those found in other Afro-American arts such as jazz, Black English and dance. As in protective newspapered walls, with printed words and

magazine photos, busy Afro-American quilts convey multiple messages in ideographic nine-patch, wild geese, triangle images, etc.

While Euro-American appliquéd quilts are primarily decorative, Afro-American appliqué quilts often tell stories and express ideas in the same manner as African appliquéd textiles. With bold appliqued shapes, African cultures recorded court histories, religious values, and personal histories of famous individuals, using designs symbolizing power, skill, leadership, wisdom, courage, balance, composure, and other personal and religious qualities.

With iconography drawn from the imagination from Southern rural black culture, and from popular American culture (magazines, television, and cereal boxes), Afro-American quilts mirror the diverse influences that shape the lives of black women in the United States (Figs. 9, 10). Some women cut out magazine illustrations and reproduce them in cloth; others are inspired by animal pictures and search for appropriate fuzzy materials; a few make paper templates from dreamed designs; and some continue using old traditional symbols.

African cloth charms, cloth mummies, and the Kongo cosmogram influenced Caribbean and Afro-American textiles (see Wahlman in press). The African idea of shaking, waving, or twirling cloth or a flag to open the door to the other world with honor, continues in the use of Afro-American jazz funeral march umbrellas, brightly colored and adorned with bells, feathers, flowers, and ribbons (Thompson 1981:191). In Haiti there is the *"Paquet Congo"* charm with arms (Fig. 8); in the Southern United States it is called a *Vodun* Doll. Two Afro-American quilters applique designs featuring red men *(Baka?)* and Dolly Dingle dolls (Fig. 9), reminiscent of *Vodun* dolls. These same quilters also applique protective hands across their quilts.

The Afro-American wish, "go, yo devil, yogo" is said while tossing into a river a silk bag containing foot scrapings, in order to get rid of bad spirits (Hyatt 1974:2895). Afro-American Yoyo quilts are made from little puffs of silky cloth, little gathered pockets of material sewn onto large cloths, which may be quilted or not. Yoyo quilts now retain only the empty aesthetic form of a Mojo charm.

The epitome of the Afro-American charm-like quilt is one with pleated and stuffed shells, by Arester Earl (Fig. 10). The three-dimensional shells in many colors, patterns, and materials (mostly silk-like) are sewn onto a red cloth. The quilt is significant because it combines two important Kongo religious principles — 1) that of *Minkisi*, or the medicines of God enclosed in cloth; 2) the form and meaning of a shell, emblem of the sea, world of Kongo ancestors, and 3) The shape of the cross, or the Kongo cosmogram (see Thompson 1983:198). That a quilter could have naively combined these potent Kongo symbols seems unlikely.

Some Afro-American Artists: Bill Traylor, Montgomery, AL

Several themes dominate Traylor's drawings of people, animals, and eclectic scenes (see Wahlman, 1982). One major theme is the man wearing a top hat (Fig. 12) — perhaps a self portrait, but also a symbol hauntingly similar to Haitian images of *Baron Samedi*, lord of death. Was Traylor, 85 when he began to draw in earnest, thinking of himself as half dead, half the god, Baron Samedi?

A second theme involes men and women wearing cloth with graphic designs (dots and slashes) which resemble Cuban and Haitian religious costumes decorated with ideographic references to secret societies. Many designs are derived from Nigerian signs associated with the power and wisdom of the leopard, a symbol of leadership. Traylor's art also includes numerous depictions of spotted cats, perhaps leopards. Traylor also drew snakes, *Vodun* symbols for Dumballah, the Rainbow god among the Fon (West Africa) and in Haiti.

Traylor's style, one with flat silhouetted shapes, could easily have been inspired by or derived from Afro-Haitian ground paintings (*Veve*) or Afro-Cuban script (*Anaforuana*). Both traditions are infused with Fon and Kongo cultural traditions. Geometric elements in Traylor's drawings resemble Haitian ground paintings, used to attract various *Vodun* gods. Traylor's T shapes are reminiscent of the Kongo cosmogram, representing the four moments of birth, life, death, and rebirth.

Another Africanism may be seen in Traylor's drawing of a face pot. 'Devil Jugs,' they are called in the Southeastern United States, where they are made by black and white folk potters. Art historians trace black-made face pots back to Kongo (Central Africa) medicinal containers originally made of clay, cloth or wood. Traylor's image is also similar to 19th and 20th century face pots from Zaire and Angola.

From the accumulation of meaningful images in Traylor's work, one can speculate that Traylor or his family may have come from Haiti or Cuba, and that their cultural heritage had roots among the Kongo speaking peoples in what is now Zaire.

Not all Traylor's art can be tied to Africa or Afro-Caribbean roots. Much is delightful commentary on rural Southern imagery — animals, people, agricultural scenes — done by a man who is obviously delighted in his art. The sophistication of his drawings conveys an artistic sensitivity on one level and symbolic depth on another. Sometimes we see the conscious or unconscious signs of his African heritage, while often we see only the work of a genuine rural folk artist.

Nellie Mae Rowe, Atlanta, GA.

Like other Black American folk arts, the art of Nellie Mae Rowe

(Alexander 1983) exists on many levels. Collectors enjoy her paintings for their free use of vibrant colors and dynamic complex patterns. Photographers revelled in the rich eclecticism of her house and garden in Vining, Georgia. Folklorists are fascinated with her life memories; and art historians are intrigued by the traditional Afro-American forms seen in all her arts.

Nellie Mae Rowe was a devout Christian; yet her use of color, form, and materials reveal a cultural tradition with roots in Haitian and African religions. Her paintings are two dimensional expressions of the three dimensional arts seen in her sculpture and her house and garden. Nellie Mae Rowe's desire to paint, to sculpt, and to decorate her house and garden, was not just a naive expression of ideosyncratic behavior; rather, it grew from her Afro-American heritage. In her art we see a rich assemblage of Afro-American cultural forms. She did not tell us their meanings, yet we cannot deny her upbringing in a tradition oriented family. Her mother knew herbal medicines and made quilts; her father made white oak baskets and was a blacksmith.

Nellie Mae Rowe's garden exemplifies Kongo religious ideas associating containers, and glass, white, and blue objects, with the watery ancestral realm. That she hung things in trees, as is done in Zaire, adds weight to the argument of cultural continuities. Nellie Mae Rowe made gum sculpture with beads, and stuffed dolls, often red, but without *Vodun* connotations (Rowe 1981). Her dolls and sculptures, although not containers for medicinal curing substances, adopt the shape and colors of *Vodun* dolls. Nellie Mae Rowe speaks of tying cloth to make dolls when she was a child. In Zaire, one ties cloth to seal an oath associated with activating a wooden statue's curing charm (Thompson 1977-80).

Nellie Mae Rowe's references to dogs, in sculpture and painting, also has an African base. In Kongo religion, the dog is a messenger from the dead and his vision is spiritual (Thompson 1977-80). In her biography, Mrs. Rowe mentions that her mother would sometimes hear a dog lapping and see one, when none was there. In her paintings, Mrs. Rowe used dogs to represent Atlanta's dead children (Alexander 1983).

Her painted symmetrical organic forms are reminiscent of *Vevé* (Haitian *Vodun* ground paintings), so there may have been some memory of *Vodun* forms. Nellie Mae Rowe used the same combination of symmetrical forms (based on the Kongo cosmogram) and organic details (based on the Nigerian writing system) in her paintings (Fig. 6). Someone in her family taught her to do "fancy writing drawings" at an early age; whether that person drew *Vevé* signs, with or without meanings, is conjectural. After viewing a recent exhibition of *Vodun* flags, her uncle commented that he remembered such designs from his youth (Alexander 1985).

Figure 12.
Man in Top Hat, drawing by Bill Traylor, AL.
Haitian artists often depict Baron Samedi, Vodun *lord of death, in a top hat. Traylor uses this image often.*
Photo by Bill Martin.

Figure 13.
Clay Skull, by James Ford Thomas, MS, 1983
This skull refers to death, to protective religious ideas from the Kongo people of Central Africa, and to reincarnation.
Photo by Bill Martin.

Many aspects of Nellie Mae Rowe's paintings reveal her knowledge of Afro-American textile traditions, which emphasize bright colors, large designs, asymmetry, and improvisation. We see these same characteristics in Nellie Mae Rowe's paintings. While quilters adapt Euro-American block patterns and Afro-Americanize them with brighter colors, larger designs, asymmetry, and improvisations, Nellie recreates her magical playhouse and garden in her paintings, and then improvises multiple variations on these favorite themes, in bright colors and bold asymmetrical designs.

If only one or two African forms occurred in the arts of Nellie Mae Rowe, one could suspect coincidental circumstances. When one finds numerous instances of similar forms, and sometimes similar meanings, one cannot deny a cultural heritage that is stronger than any one person or lineage. That Nellie Mae Rowe was a healing, curing person, adds additional credence to the belief that she knew what she was doing in her use of forms with multiple layers of meaning.

James Ford Thomas, Leland, MS.

The art of James Ford Thomas is a key link in the long chain of symbolic forms which begins with Kongo ceramic, wooden, and grave yard charms, involves 19th century American face pots, and also includes bottle trees and the bulb and foil art of South Carolinian James Hampton.

In the 19th century South Carolina black potters made ceramic face jugs with kaolin eyes and teeth and open agressive mouths, to place on graves, presumably both to commemorate the dead and to protect it from evil spirits. They also made bust length ceramic portraits of dead people, in the shape of bottles, to place on graves. Both face pots and ceramic bust sized portraits derive from Kongo *Nkisi* grave traditions. Ceramic containers with figures and carved stone figures are placed on graves in central Africa still (Thompson 1981).

The ceramic sculpture of James Thomas continues both the African and the 19th century American tradition of *Minkisi*, or protective clay charms. Thomas' clay skull containers (Fig. 13) continue the tradition of the original Kongo ceramic medicinal containers as well as the later wooden charms with human face and body. The wooden figures were made with kaolin eyes (ancestral vision), an open agressive mouth with sharp white teeth, and a cavity in the tummy for magical substances.

Thomas put tinfoil, marbles, and light bulbs in the eye sockets of his skulls and heads, "to keep away evil spirits," (Thomas 1984). His interpretation reflects Southern folk religious beliefs in "power eyes" (Ferris 1983:123) which have their roots in Kongo religion. Thomas also uses real teeth or corn in an open agressive mouth. His dream to mold an entire man from clay reminds one of the full length Kongo

wooden figures, made with a hollow in the stomach to hold magic substances. Thomas' skulls also recall the Kongo belief in incarnation, for as the Kongo cosmogram circles, it predicts the rebirth of souls of good people into the bodies of their children and grandchildren. That Thomas was also a gravedigger makes his art even more significant.

Thomas' other sculpture is also reminiscent of Kongo stone grave sculpture made to commemorate famous people. The same serene feeling and attention to detail marks his portraits of people. Thomas' depiction of snakes, squirrels, dogs, and other animals may be linked to Kongo wooden sculptural traditions which feature animals, particularly watery messengers from the ancestors such as snakes and frogs. In Kongo religion, the dog is a messenger from the dead and his vision is spiritual. Similar clay figures (animals) were made in Haiti and probably used in *Vodun* rituals (Courlander 1960:124).

Like many other Afro-American folk artists, Thomas is inspired by his dreams. Not the dreams of an ideosyncratic artist, Thomas' dreams, like those of other folk artists, revive visual imagery from the culture of his childhood. His dreams are culturally conditioned. As children, many Afro-Americans were exposed to folk religious concepts and symbolic visual forms which later surface in their adult arts. These arts revive a past cultural environment which emphasized religious forms with meanings which could not always be put into words. Similar instances have been recorded for African arts which contain concepts which may be too important to put into speech. (Thompson 1983:297). That so many Afro-American folk artists create art with visual ties to African and Afro-American religious concepts indicates that they may all be unconsciously reviving a cultural system of their childhood which valued these forms highly. Paul Bohannan once wrote:

> Culture is coded in memory, in behavior, in materials, in language, in art, in writing, and computers — the most important thing about culture is that it is always encoded twice — once within the human being, in electrical and chemical form, and once outside the human being in some other form. (1974)

I suggest that most ideas highly valued by cultures are encoded in many forms outside the human mind. Such seems to be the case with African protective religious ideas which have been encoded into visual arts, songs and dance, and black speech. All forms recognize improvisation as a style; and many refer to West African and Central African religious concepts which survive in contemporary Afro-American cultures because they have been encoded so many ways. The redundancy indicates high value and insures survivability.

As art historians will know, ideas encoded in objects can sometimes

carry messages over greater time spans than minds or words. George Kubler once wrote:

> "the artist is not a free agent obeying only his own will. His situation is rigidly bound by a chain of prior events. The chain is invisible to him and it limits his motion. He is not aware of it as a chain but only as a vis a tergo, as the force of events behind him. The conditions imposed by these prior events require of him either that he follow obediently in the path of tradition, or that he rebel against the tradition. In either case, his decision is not a free one; it is dictated by prior events of which he senses only dimly and indirectly the overpowering urgency, and by his own congenital peculiarities of temperment . . . the individual is driven in every action by forces of an intensity absent from other lives; he is possessed by his vision of the possible, and he is obsessed by the urgency of its realization, in a solitary posture of intense effort, traditionally represented by the figures of the poet or the muse (Kubler 1976:50-51).

These comments are particularly insightful when applied to Afro-American art which have so often been labelled idiosyncratic because the artists could not articulate the African traditions that shaped their visions, dreams, and arts. Thomas' art may parallel the curing power of the Afro-American hoodoo doctor (Ferris 1983:123). Both Thomas and conjure men have the power to cure or protect. Afro-Americans may use Thomas' art because of an unconscious memory of the protective nature of similar arts in Africa. That James Ford Thomas is a Blues musician, adds additional credence to his use of forms with multiple layers of meaning. His skulls refer to death on one level, to protective charms, on another, and to reincarnation on a third level.

Discussion

Black men and women remembered African artistic techniques and traditions when they came to the new world. They mixed and sorted their own traditions, then combined them with Euro-American and American Indian ideas to create unique creolized arts. Their combined ideas were passed down from generation to generation, thus unknowingly preserving many African art traditions. If one found only singular references to African traditions in the art of Afro-American folk artists, one could suspect coincidental circumstances. But when we find numerous instances of similar forms, and sometimes similar meanings, we cannot deny a cultural heritage that is stronger than any one person or any one lineage.

Afro-American arts involve aesthetic decisions, but many of those aesthetic choices derive from rich cultural traditions. In their choice of techniques, materials, textiles, shapes, design names, and colors, Afro-

Americans perpetuate forms which once had protective religious significance. If African arts were made to protect people from enemies who would surely sell them as slaves if captured, would not the memory of protective forms have endured in the New World? The concept of art in many forms to keep evil away prevail in Africa, South America, the Caribbean, and the United States.

Afro-American folk arts are evidence that American folk arts are not naive, primitive, or simplistic. We can only guess as to whether Afro-American folk artists unknowingly continue the use of symbolic forms because they are deeply imbedded in the culture, or if they know the meanings behind the symbols but refuse to disclose them. Knowledge of *Vodun* religious symbols is often incompatible with Afro-American Christianity.

Afro-American arts are unique in America, fusing various international traditions to produce new ones. Afro-American artists maintaining this creolized aesthetic demonstrate the strength of African cultural traditions in contemporary American society, affirming the extraordinary tenacity of African religious ideas over hundreds of years in the face of major historical obstacles. Their contribution suggests that the unique way in which *any* culture codes beauty in the seen world is an indispensible tool for organizing experience.

NOTES

1. Four African civilizations had profound influences on Afro-American folk arts: the Mande speaking peoples of West Africa (the modern countries of Guinea, Mali, Senegal, and Burkina Faso); Yoruba and Fon peoples from the Republic of Benin and Nigeria; the Ejagham people of Nigeria and Cameroon; and the Kongo and Kongo influenced peoples of Zaire and Angola. See Curtin (1969:224-225) and Wood (1974:34-41).
2. See Herskovits (1941, 1955); Courlander (1960); Szwed and Abraham (1970); and Wood (1974).
3. See Thompson (1969); Vlach (1978); Wahlman (1982).
4. See Thompson (1983); Jansen and McCarty (1974); Bunseki (1969).
5. Charms have a soul or spiritual spark in them. The Kikongo word for that spiritual spark, force or soul is *Mooyo*. The *y* lightly changes to a *j*. Personal communication, Robert Farris-Thompson, 1984.
6. Folk song written by Willie Dixon for Muddy Waters, with whose name the song is usually associated. Other bluesmen have recorded the song, however, among them B. B. King for ABC records, Inc., in 1977. Personal communication Sue Hart and Phillips Stevens Jr.

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Marketing the Art of Migrant Workers

MARY ARNOLD TWINING

In an apparent attempt to humanize the machinery of agricultural production, in the early 1960's Congress initiated legislation which allowed migrant worker centers to establish programs of education to teach the workers English as a first and second language, mathematics, history, and coaching for high school equivalency examinations, among other courses of instruction. Few centers took full advantage of this opportunity. At the Geneseo center, however, educational classes take place regularly twice a week, and medical/dental/optical appointments are arranged on a need for services basis. There are special occasions such as poetry readings and performances by itinerant musicians or dance troupes which happen irregularly either at the camps or at the center.

Migrant farm workers travel to the harvesting localities in either planes or buses (vans) with little baggage, which creates a disrupted lifestyle for them. While they are settling into new surroundings in the upstate western New York area, they must cope with uncertain work schedules and seek to grasp the ins and outs of a new program of social services and educational opportunities, all to take place between late August and early November

Survey 1984

It was in this context that a survey was undertaken in 1984 by the Boces-Geneseo Migrant Center, Dr. Gloria Mattera, Director. The Folk Arts Program was envisioned as an extension of the art program, to provide something the workers can keep. All the things that they handle otherwise in the course of their work is shipped off, and they themselves eventually ship out also. There was also the idea of extending a program of alternatives to drinking and drug abuse in the workers' idle hours, pastimes which seem to offer much needed surcease from the rough conditions in the fields and camps, but which take an undue toll in life direction, energy and money. It was clear that the folk arts could relate to the workers' inner selves as nothing else quite could by connecting to, eliciting, and showing respect for their ethnic and cultural heritage.

The Center contacted me as a folklorist with experience in folk crafts and the African world, to consider the feasibility of establishing

a folk arts program for the workers. With funding from the Folk Arts Division of the New York State Council on the Arts, I observed the educational, service, and art programs already under way at the camps to determine where such a program might fit in. Also it was necessary to confirm that such an agendum would work, given the short periods of leisure and the many other activities already going on. The folk art sessions were not to interfere with the classes or other appointments the workers have. The sessions were to be loosely structured and non-instructional, and the folk art people would have to be flexible enough to squeeze into the interstices to maximize the short time available with the workers. Given all the constraints and conditions, it nevertheless seemed eminently feasible to have such a program.

Further reasons for my drawing a positive conclusion from the survey were the diversity of backgrounds and ethnic variety among the workers, particularly the rich representation of African heritage. The involvement with folk arts put the workers in a position of being in charge of something, through knowledge of their own culture and aesthetic decision making. By so doing they could bring to the public an awareness of their art and identity and establish a link with a population group among whom they lived for a brief time each year. It seemed that the scheme could work only if the program was designed to be non-exploitative, that is, the sessions would be supportive but non-directive, and the workers could keep the art pieces, sell them or leave them as they chose. As it happened, the concept of an art show for the workers spontaneously grew out of the preliminary survey itself, and it brought forth some pieces by the workers which had not surfaced during the expeditions to the camps. The workers were entranced by the sight of their artistic endeavors duly mounted, labelled and displayed in a bona fide museum. Some of their works were first-time efforts so the program and its spectacular denouement were particularly heart-warming to them; their pride and joy were evident to the onlookers. As the art show had created a focus that helped to overcome initial hesitance, we felt the signs were propitious.

The productions which resulted from these contacts were exhibited at a gathering of all the workers on All Camps Day, an occasion at which they come in from all the camps for sports, performances for and by the workers, a show of their artistic output and their prize pieces, craftmaking demonstrations so that people might watch or participate, table games such as chess, checkers, and "kai" (an ancient game also called *mancala* in the Near East and *warri* in Africa), and a chicken dinner. Prizes were awarded for the athletic games, the board games, solo and group musical performances, fine and folk art, crafts, popular art and the Atelier Prize for the group which produced the most in both quality and quantity. These prizes were not announced in advance so there was no real competition for them except in the case of

the athletic contests. Some of the craft teachers were on hand with little projects and materials to demonstrate or just to have things available should any of the workers want to try their hand at something. It was quite a scene, with people taking in the art show, having doughnuts and coffee (one man had to be talked off the bus; it was the prospect of coffee and crullers that did it), people dancing to a band playing Caribbean style music, triumphant athletes arriving on the scene to announce their latest conquest of one or another camp, some trying out the craft tables, a few Mexicans sitting in the corner singing having just discovered each other (they had been at different camps). In between acts of performances by either the workers or the visiting talents jugglers entertained the onlookers, spontaneous erupted performances among the workers or combinations of visitors, workers and staff. One man was discovered to have an old bullet wound that was making him sick, while a newborn baby and its proud family were sitting quietly in the corner. Although it was a busy occasion, it was not wild and everybody had a wonderful time.

Community Exhibitions

Subsequently there was a somewhat more sedate exhibition at a community museum, El Museo Francisco Oller y Diego Rivera in Buffalo, where the workers sang, ate and viewed the art works they and their fellow workers had created. In 1984, the startup exhibit entitled "An Afternoon of Haitian Arts" had been held at the Museum of African and African-American Art and Antiquities. The assembling of the works for these occasions was a complex business, as many of the workers were still finishing their pieces. Trying to put together a catalog of these works when we were not sure what would be in on time and what would not was frustrating at moments. Because mid-season decampments removed some pieces we had counted on and works in progress were left behind, and there were unexpected last-minute arrivals, the catalogue had to be assembled with the information at hand and with general descriptions of the broad categories of the expected art pieces. The arranging of the opening and the special reception for the workers left little time for speculation; we simply had to take things as they came — which seemed altogether normal, as far as the workers were concerned.

There were performances in 1984 and 1985 by a visiting itinerant musician, Berrien Thorne, the founder and curator of the Neighborhood Music Making Museum of Cambridge, Massachusetts. And there were performances by the workers. In 1985 an Afro-American worker, Sidney A., sang spirituals and a popular number or two, and Tito G., a Mexican worker, took up a guitar and sang Mexican *Corridas*. As the exhibit was held at El Museo Francisco Oller y Diego Rivera, which is based in a west side Puerto Rican community in

Buffalo, the input from the Spanish speaking workers was much appreciated. The Puerto Rican group, who unfortunately had to return home a few days before the reception at El Museo, was represented singing and playing on a video tape. This event was well attended by community people and workers so it accomplished its aim in acquainting people with the workers and their art.

Folk Arts Program

The Folk Arts program in 1985 included four consultants: Dr. Sue Roark-Calnek, a cultural and social anthropologist; Dr. Ellen Koskoff, an ethnomusicologist; Dr. of anthropology Rosemarie Chierici; and Dr. Mary Arnold Twining, an anthropological folklorist and exhibition coordinator. Sylvia Kelly, on the staff of the Migrant Center, was the facilitator of the program. As a unit the consultants worked on collecting music, visual arts, spoken arts, and folk arts and crafts for research purposes as well as for the Folk Art Show and Sale.

The ethnic groups to be represented among the migrant artists were determined through interviews with the workers. It was established where they came from and with what folk art and crafts they might have had acquaintance or experience. African-American, Jamaican, Haitian and Puerto Rican were the main groups in the camps; in their home areas folk arts have existed from the first day Africans were brought to these shores and those of the Caribbean Islands. In their hearts the Africans brought memories of their homeland. The shapes and patterns of articles of daily use such as cloths, fishnets, baskets, and sacred figurines were precious items of mental contraband. In the New World, when they had the opportunity, the uprooted Africans would re-create something of their remembered homes. As generation succeeded generation, the patterns and styles were learned anew by the young, and the lost cultures were re-created and re-affirmed, and new cultural streams developed in the African Diaspora. African-Americans expressed their cultural tenacity by adapting as necessity dictated and by letting as much of their heritage shine forth as they dared. As the Afro-American religious song states:

> I'm going to sing my song
> while I have the chance.
> I may not get the chance
> anymore.

The forms and functions of most of the pieces the workers made, however, emanate directly from the culture of the southern United States.

Worker Artists

The migrant worker artists are a varied group who share a common

commitment for the traditional arts. Their lives, for the most part, have been devoted simply to survival. Their creations emerge from an inner vision that makes the migrant world a more bearable place in which to live and invests them with some sense of control over the substance and circumstances of their existence. As artists, they make aesthetic decisions which affect the outcome of their work. Inasmuch as they do this, such decision-making puts them in the community of artists worldwide. They are folk artists, which is to say they lack formal training, but they decorate their world, amuse spectators, and make statements with their art, which is what we expect of the artists whose works we hang on the walls in great museums and call by name.

It is not certain that the artists themselves have always been conscious of these two elements — the ancestral and the creative — in their work. They most often practice their art because they love it or for pragmatic reasons such as making needed bedcovers. The result, however, is the reaffirmation of their African past — of a heritage real and meaningful though diluted by syncretism with European values. Their work acquaints us with the results of intercultural encounters of purpose, materials and aesthetics developed along the African-American continuum of artistic survival and self-expression.

Survey 1985

In the secondary survey, in 1985, it turned out that the Puerto Rican workers wanted to play music in a band such as they did at home on the beaches. The Afro-Americans in the different camps tentatively expressed interest in music and dance, baskets, quilts and brooms. The Haitians indicated that they, given the right materials, could make nets, crochet, embroidery, write plays, sing, dance, drum, play guitar, tell stories, make kites, write poetry, build boat models (or draw pictures and plans for them), and make tin lanterns. The Jamaicans evinced an interest in basketry, music, and wood carving. The Mexicans did not want to participate but thought they might sing if the opportunity arose.

As with any fieldwork situation the initial hesitation led to some false starts as people found they did not remember as much as they thought they could or the material was so strange as to throw them off. When we brought the conga drum, maracas, raspa, cowbell and bongos for the music sessions with the Puerto Ricans, they dashed in and out of the area containing the instruments hitting a few licks on the drum as though they couldn't quite believe it was there. The alternate sudden roaring of the drum and the ensuing quiet which went on for a while sounded like someone trying to start an outboard motor or a grass cutting machine. Eventually it began in earnest and everybody settled down. This same group of instruments was taken around to the other camps and they were used to good effect by the

Haitians and the Afro-Americans who enjoyed experimenting with what the instruments could do while they composed songs.

After a false start with a guitar in the Jamaican camp, one of the workers, Joseph D., began work on a basket. One of the younger workers wanted to do some carving but he left for another job before he could get started. The procurement of tools and materials for the Haitian artisans was a job in itself. A partial list included tin cans, solder, wood and glue; paper, light wood, and cloth for kites; string, scissors, needles, yard goods, crochet hooks, and yarn. Even though we worked through interpreters, the message was clear — bring them the raw materials and they would gladly make the craft items.

The Continuing Journey

The idea of a journey, as cited in the show and catalog title, "The Continuing Journey" (Fig. 1), has a natural significance in the lives of the migrant workers. In many cases they have come from distant parts to join the migrant stream. Like many before them they have travelled far and long, further and further away from their original homes in the southern United States, the Caribbean or Central America, with only the prospects of more travel ahead. The majority of Americans regard travel as an edifying and entertaining activity, and people save their money to participate in it. Travel is envisioned as an occupation for retirees and other people of leisure. For the migrant workers, travel is an inescapable fact of their existence until they can improve their economic condition through education or learn a useful skill to provide themselves a stepping stone to another, more settled way of life.

The Folk Art

Folk art in the United States is considered in at least two frameworks; the first is the antique emphasis on older collectibles and accentuates the product and its provenience. The second has to do with traditional art and craft, its makers and the process. Figure 1 shows a picture done by some workers when the notion of folk art was being explored. The first worker's reaction was to draw the flower, another man came behind him and drew the boat around the flower. It is that process which is of interest to our research, as well as the resultant product.

The understanding that artistic sensibility travels with people wherever they go may be one of the results of this whole project. Folk art is transmitted through informal teaching or example and therefore may not rely on studios, schools or other static concepts to come into being. Part of the aim of the Boces-Geneseo folk art project is to communicate to the workers and others the concept of these much-

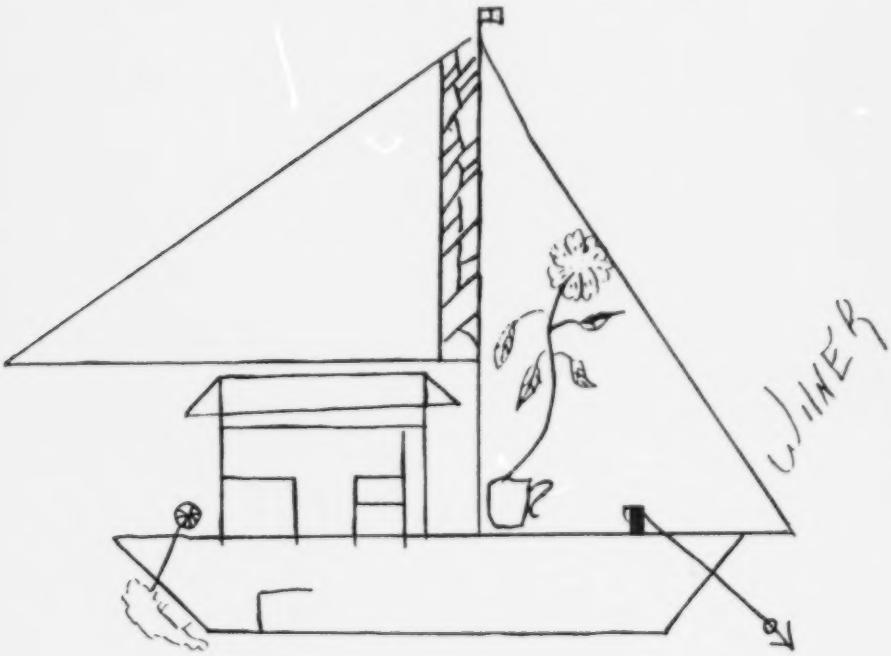
EL MUSEO FRANCISCO OLLER Y DIEGO RIVERA

and

The Folk Arts Program

of

THE BOCES-GENESEO MIGRANT CENTER



present

THE CONTINUING JOURNEY: ART OF MIGRANT WORKERS

Figure 1. *Cover of exhibition catalog.*

travelled people as something besides economic units. Furthermore, we may enhance the fact that as human beings they have beauty, worth and an aesthetic resonance within, which may be evinced through their art and craft. Each of the worker groups has distinctive customs and lifeways and there are certain discernable characteristics that bind them together sometimes as Caribbeans and sometimes as people of the African world.

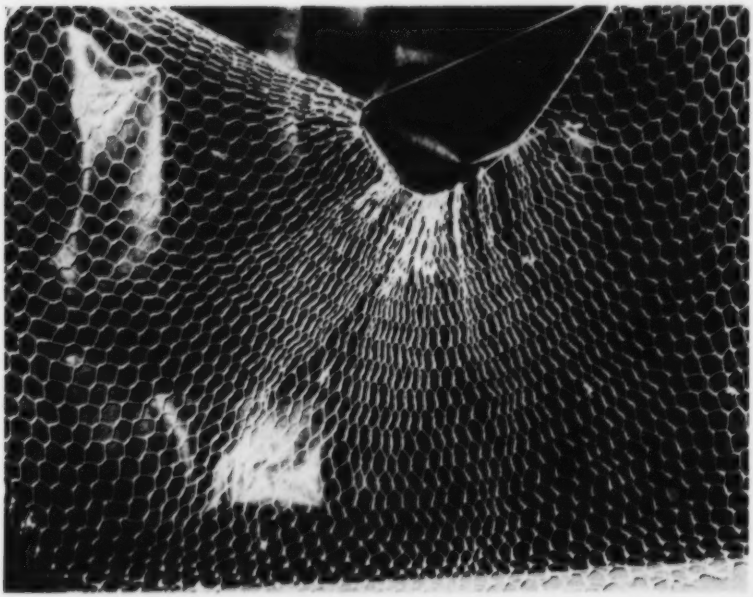
The societies from which the workers come are culturally creolized, for the most part. Ethnic mixtures of many African and European groups in differing proportions characterize the physical makeup, the languages, the arts, cooking, life customs, etc. The Haitians speak a creole language with French and various African languages as contributory elements. The Jamaicans speak a creole language formed from English and some African languages. The Afro-Americans code-switch between Afro-English creole and American standard English as the occasion requires.

The items or pictures produced are made with locally obtained American materials so that in some cases they have had to approximate something they could obtain easily in their place of origin. The style is as true to its beginnings as geographical distance and scarcity of authentic materials permit.

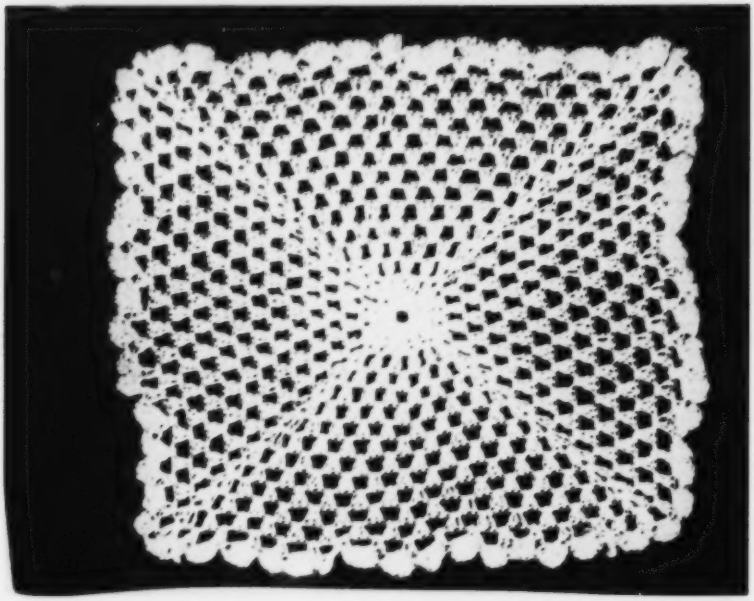
Some of the pieces are artistic crafts, such as quilts which have a practical value as well as an aesthetic dimension. The quilts and the tin lanterns have the merit of being salvage crafts, as the artists utilize materials which already been useful in another context. The making of fishnets is a strictly utilitarian craft and has a special character as a familiar sight of home for anyone from coastal regions of the African world. The boats recall treasured memories of activities at home as well as the nightmare journeys to coastal Florida from Haiti.

Fishnets. The fishnets are made of cotton twine which is manipulated by the maker with a netting shuttle made of plastic. The net shown here, made by Elius S. from one of the apple camps and Haiti, is for catching medium-size fish and is pulled through the water by fishermen at either end.

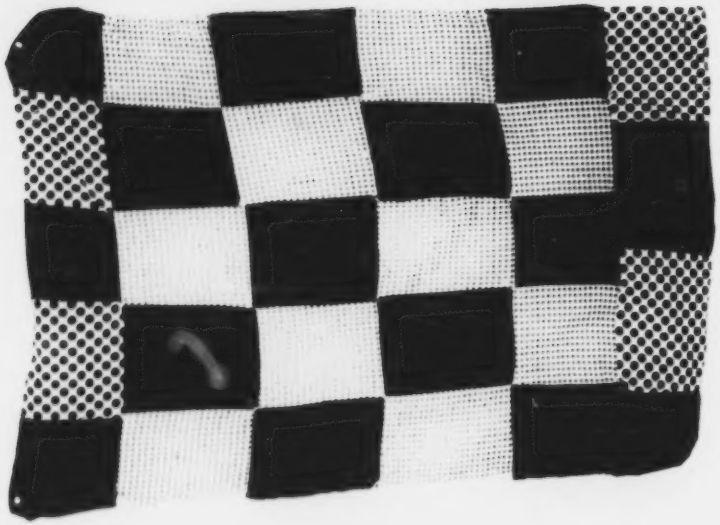
Quilts. The quilts are a combination of tops designed according to their African origins and the layered warmth of European origin. The Ewe and the Ashanti people of modern-day Ghana in West Africa have provided us with some of the models for African-American strip quilts. Although in West Africa the belt weaving (from which the African-American designs are ultimately taken) is done by men, African-American women, charged with the responsibility of keeping their families warm, have re-created these designs. In Africa the belt weaving is done on looms of which the male weavers' bodies



Fish net by Haitian worker. Photo: Liz Boettcher.



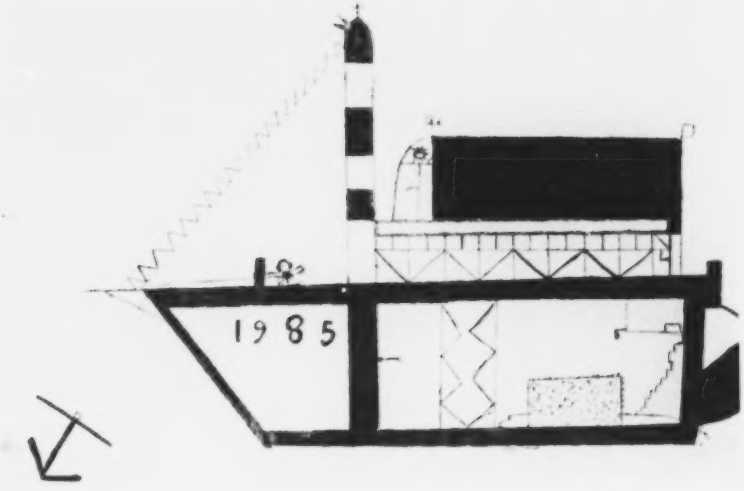
Crocheted mat by Haitian worker. Photo: Liz Boettcher.



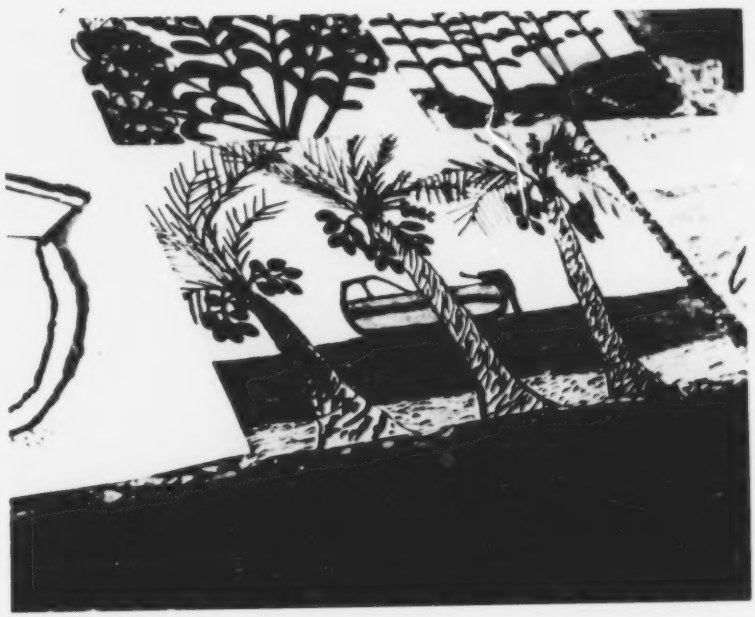
Quilt sample, about 2½" by 1½", by Haitian worker. Colors: wine red and white. Photo: Margaret Brown

themselves are a part; in some cases, the ends of the warp, through which they weave to make the patterns, is hooked around their toes. The weavers have a mental catalogue of patterns for each of the rectangular sections of the cloth which have names. The last section may bear the name, "I have run out of ideas." When the belts are finished, they can be edge-sewn into larger cloths to be worn on ceremonial and grand occasions.

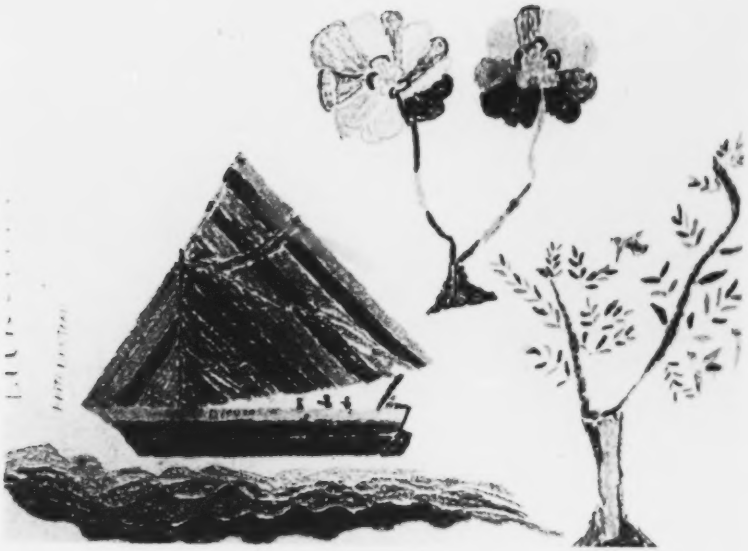
In some quilts, seemingly made in the European-American patterns, it is difficult to see the relationship to the African textiles. Much of this is because the quilt pattern is partially determined by the prepatterned fabrics used by the African-American women. The quilts are constructed in a European fashion using stuffing and backing to provide warmth. From a design standpoint, the part of the quilt which interests us is the top. And, when we look at the design used on the top portion of these European-American styled quilts, there are certain patterns which tend to correspond to the shapes found in West African societies. Underlying reasons corresponding to cultural influences in a particular community may predetermine the artistic or aesthetic choices an artist might make. I call these secondary choices, because people make them in a context of syncretism in which elements from different cultures came together to form a new cultural presence, as in the case of the African-Americans.



Boat. Haitian worker. Photo: Liz Boettcher.

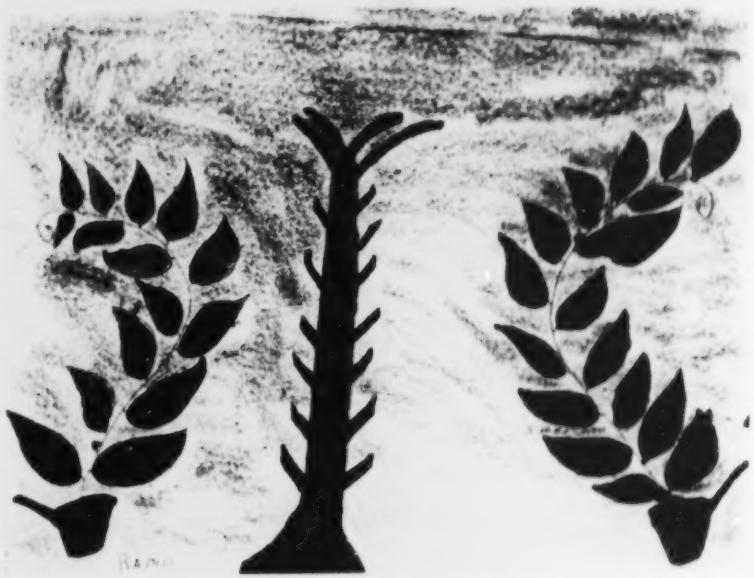


Beach scene, watercolor by Jamaican worker, on table with other paintings in the show. Photo: Thom Twining.

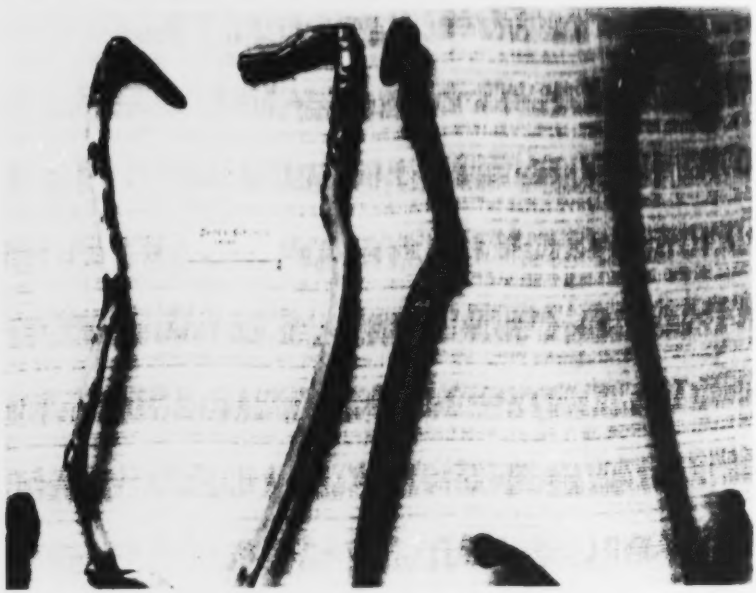


"Haiti Barteau," Chalk. Photo: Liz Boettcher.

"Man Flying Haitian Kite," Crayon. Photo: Liz Boettcher.



Watercolor and pencil by Haitian worker. Photo: Liz Boettcher.



Canes by James Scrivens, African-American, from Alabama. Scrivens was an experienced artist before coming to the Center. Photo: M. A. Twining.

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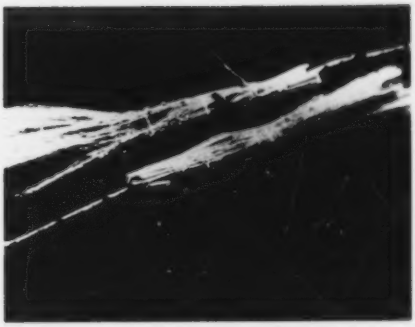

Top left: detail of cane by James Scrivens. Top right: brooms, African-American. Bottom left: basket, Jamaican. Bottom right: tin lanterns, Haitian. Photos: Diane Bush.

The quilts can be cryptic documents encoded with the colors and textures of remembered life events and favorite garments useful still as warm covering on the bed when no longer required as clothing. These textile creations communicate a history and continuity of art and culture that is a valuable part of the heritage which has so often been passed down orally. Certainly the theme of documentation of African-American life and times, including dreams and visions, hopes and protests, is one that pervades the painting and quilts which serve to record in one symbolic language the hopes, dreams and actualities of the artists.

Painting. Folk artists with no formal training paint things as they see them or remember them. They are not greatly concerned, if at all, with academic considerations of precise perspective and proper proportion. The pictorial emphasis of some of the paintings makes them equivalent to painted snapshots, taken to remind the artists and viewers of interesting events or favorite occasions. The painting, and quilts serve as *aide memoires:* not only pictures of people and events playing themselves out with charm and color but also decorative patterns made up of materials which recall beloved people and family experiences. They also assist as records of cultural traits, brilliant imaginings of tropical flowers, tropical birds or other colorful renditions of various themes. Subjects which frequently recur in the artistic motifs are flowers, birds, houses, boats, cars, trucks and occasionally, people. Haitian painting is one of the world's great folk traditions, and it is clear that outpouring of artistic expression among the Haitian workers comes from the same source, though at a different level. The inspiration of the tropical surroundings in Haiti is indelible in their minds as they labor in northern apple orchards and potato fields.

The Haitian workers at one of the apple camps produced an amazing volume of artistic expression. They have written a play; they sing and instrumentalize; they have drawn in quantity; they have crocheted and embroidered, made rope and then fashioned animal halters from it, made fishnet and told stories. Their output was honored by the Atelier Prize which is awarded by the BOCES-Geneseo Migrant Center to the camp which produces the most variety and volume in the Folk Arts Program.

Baskets. Basketry is one of humanity's oldest technological developments and is still practiced in most parts of the world today. Considered as a textile art, basketry can be carried out with any pliable material. In most parts of the African world, natural fiber baskets are made from palm, grasses, straw, banana leaves, corn husks and other

natural fibrous products. Haiti, Jamaica and Puerto Rico are three such areas, as well as the Sea Islands and Florida. Products such as baskets and brooms are associated with and develop out of the agricultural situation as a natural concomitant of the growing and harvesting activities.

These large northern farms where these migrants work are part of a long historical tradition which includes the Roman *latifundiae* and the southern cotton plantation. Large scale farming brings workers into contact with large amounts of fibrous garden waste materials from which craft items can be manufactured.

Each of the basketmakers is working in an old West African tradition which is still continued today on both sides of the Atlantic. The variety of basketworks has increased to include some of the more generally popular shapes, less reflective of the agricultural background in which they had their beginnings. In the South people sit outdoors telling stories and making baskets; here in the northern migrant camps they do not have that opportunity. After long hours of work, they take up their craft work if they have the strength left from their daily labors.

Distribution. The distribution of the migrant workers' art poses quite another problem. In the migrant stream, they are far from home and any vestige of a settled life or community. Needless to say, the long and arduous work hours leave little leftover time and energy for art. The workers enjoy the art classes and the craft sessions, losing themselves gratefully in something which recalls their homes; the problem which results from the fluctuating application of their artistic energies is a very uneven output which leaves less than a guaranteed supply of goods to sell.

The marketing of the craft objects was sporadically done by the individual workers themselves. Sometimes they brought things already made with them in hopes of selling them and making the season a little more profitable. Occasionally they like to keep the pieces, as they became attached in the process of making them. In many parts of the African world, process is easily as important as product, so by keeping the product they remind themselves of the familiar process. This involvement with the folk art might be one of the more enjoyable parts of the whole northern experience.

With the permission of the artists, the program undertook to sell the goods as a part of the display and communication with the surrounding community. By means of the diffusion of the articles around the community the workers became a little less alien. If there could be an assured supply of the number and type of items which could be in stock or available for sale, there could doubtless be more crafts sold on a regular basis. As it is the migrants do not have the

advantages of a more settled people whose output can be steadier and sales more predictable. As different groups of migrant workers come each year it is never sure what sort of supply both in quantity and kind will be available.

However, one thing is sure — that the workers enjoyed the sessions, particularly the exchanges over the materials and methods of making the items. At first, they were hesitant and even reluctant to commit themselves to more work or to some program they did not know much about. As the season advanced and we all got to know each other better, they began to get interested in the productive activity. They wanted to show what they could do but initially were afraid their efforts might not please the standards of the people in charge of the program. Once they understood that we were willing to accept them and their crafts for whom and what they were, they participated as much as diminished energy and long work hours would permit. Because migrancy is the nature of the life they lead they often vanish overnight, leaving behind the grim and empty camps which once held so much life. The last salutation to us or the art program might be a beautiful unicorn mural on the wall of the dining area or a small unfinished embroidery taped to the wall with the needle and thread still in it. Sometimes they departed with all the art tools and their products leaving us with only a memory. When they bequeathed the art work to us, we felt that they would not forget us or what we were trying to do.

In the end it is the uncertainty of the lifestyle that defeats the best efforts to market the artistic output in an orderly manner. For now we rely on the show and sale plan, and take each season anew as it comes, as they do.

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Special Section

MARKETING FOLK ART

ROSEMARY O. JOYCE, GUEST EDITOR

Introduction

To Market, To Market, to Sell *Some Folk Art*

ROSEMARY O. JOYCE

What is happening, folklorists are often asked, to traditional folk artists? Are there any "real" ones still around? Are they still using their same traditional processes? And are their customers interested in the fact of their tradition, its process, its history, its meaning for the artists themselves?

Yes, and no, to all of the above. Certainly there are "real" traditional artists still around these United States. Folklorists are working with a number of them. But they are fewer and fewer. Yes, many of them are still using the same processes they learned as part of their family or community tradition. But fewer and fewer of them are. And yes, some of their customers are interested in their process because of its traditional history and meaning to the culture. But no, not very many of them care about that. This special section on the folk arts deals with the many-faceted topic of how customers (and the marketing procedures designed to find and entice them) ultimately have affected, and will affect, folk artists and their art.

The loss of traditional process (and thus traditional artists, of course) began with the spread of industrialization in the last century and, subsequently, its maligned/revered mechanization of manufacturing. But the Arts and Crafts Movement, led by William Morris in England, prevailed against the decline of craftsmanship during that period. Romantic nationalism became the dominant motive in collecting and preserving the folklore of many countries. And in the early twentieth century, the "rural-handicraft movement"

blossomed in America, with its champions envisioning crafts as recreation and art, but also as rural income (especially in the Southern Appalachian highlands).[1] Tradition and crafts fit into the picture, too, of the New Deal's emphasis on glorifying the "common man" during the 1930s.

World War II brought in its aftermath a whole spectrum of physical and social upheaval, and those kinds of craft-related activities nearly ended. However, during the 1970s, a tidal wave of nostalgia engulfed the country. Suddenly — or so it seemed — Americans were passionately absorbed in finding their "roots" (due in no small part to Alex Haley's research and writing). In tandem with that search came a new veneration for anything "old," "old-fashioned," "early," "primitive," or "folk."

Begun before the celebration of the Bicentennial in 1976, the glorification of "Heritage" continued to build in intensity through that national festival, and shows no signs of abatement even now. The "good news" aspect is that it has encouraged traditional artists to continue or to revive their own craft activities. The "bad news" is that, anachronistically, it has also placed enormous pressures on them to change the very tradition for which they are receiving this new attention. Customers want the old, but they want it dressed up in trappings of the new and personalized.[2]

The word "customer" itself presages a whole different element in the exchange of goods. Once, when customers were neighbors or local store-owner middlemen, trade or barter was accepted along with cash. Now more complicated kinds of exchange have been introduced, with more sophisticated kinds of buyers. Improved transportation and communication, as well as the advent of festivals and fairs, have allowed both artists and customers new accessibility to one another. And those customers, now more urbane consumers, have become increasingly aggressive in stating their preferences. But more importantly, the merchandising world (writ large) has discovered this now-huge segment of a potential buying public, and has hopped on the heritage bandwagon with trumpets blaring. Newspaper and magazine articles further augment resultant publicity, alerting readers to the potential value in collecting "folk" art.[3]

Public sector folklorists, especially, often find themselves in a situation from which they can view these developments with great clarity. But that can be a particularly unenviable position. Frequently they are caught between their professional knowledge of tradition and the pragmatic reality of local politics. In the fall of 1985 I surveyed some, while attempting to develop a general picture of traditional basketmaking in the country today. Even though desiring to be helpful, a large number of them felt they could respond only briefly; they are extremely sensitive to the charged issue of traditional artists'

exploitation — in various ways — by merchandisers with small- to big-time operations. Therefore *any* kind of publicity, they believed, could prove damaging and exploitive, however sincere its inception. There was story upon horror story of brand new basketmakers buying from traditional artists, then selling those products as their own, complete with "folklife" ballyhoo. Or of new "folk" craftspersons posing as "traditional," and then being heavily funded and widely publicized as such by museums and government agencies. It is no wonder the buying public is confused about the nature of tradition. One Ohio man, recognizing the new popularity of traditional crafts, taught himself one. He recently confided in me how he loves to fool people with stories of his great-grandfather's teaching him the trade. "Why I'd have to be 125 years old fer that t'be true," he chuckles, "but they don't even think about that!"

What does all this mean for traditional artists? A deep concern for their future and the future of their crafts was voiced as long ago as 1967 by Henry Glassie and again in 1970 by Michael Owen Jones. Their objections were directed at handcraft groups and crafts programs, sincere and well-meaning as they were (see Robert Teske's article in this issue for elaboration and reference).

In October 1983, the Folk Arts Section of the American Folklore Society addressed this complex issue with a series of papers at the Annual Meeting in Nashville.[1] As luck — and the vagaries of the scheduling process — had it, we participants were frustrated in our plans for a stimulating audience dialogue-debate afterwards, since the Annual Business Meeting was convening in our very location! I introduced the subject again at the Washington Meeting on Folk Art, sponsored by the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress in December 1983, continuing the charge of the Folk Arts Panel members. It is a welcome opportunity now to present these updated papers here. Our long-awaited dialogue/debate can now continue, with passionate readers — instead of listeners — from whom to provoke response.

The central focus of our concern is this whole subject of marketing, and its many ramifications. But note: whereas "To market, to market" used to refer to a noun, a place name, it is now a verb. And it is a verb characterized by vigor and competitive energy.

First we must recognize that artists who are producing enough to go beyond their personal use have long wanted — or needed — to explore the realm of selling, i.e., the marketplace. Enter the villain, money. Or is it a villain? What about recognizing it rather as the "coin of the realm?" Would we, in some kind of ivory tower idealism, wish to prevent craftspersons from earning their keep as we do ourselves? Would that evolve from a desire to retain a purity of tradition (that is possibly more meaningful to us than to any craftsperson)? Is it

advisable to move beyond the ideal of the withdrawn, objective, uninvolved academician? Should we help or advise or force craftspeople to withstand the appeals of insistent would-be customers that they vary a line, or modify a curve, or substitute a material? If so, can we convince artists (and customers too) that purity is as important as sales? *Is it?*

These are only a few of the myriad questions opened by the explosive subject of marketing the folk arts. It is a vast and complex arena for discussing, arguing, and acting. The authors here have begun a dialogue, by looking at the subject from varying topics and viewpoints.

C. Kurt Dewhurst and Marsha MacDowell contribute "The Marketing of Objects in the Folk Art Style." Here they comment on the proliferation of interest in "folk art" — or rather, what folklorists would term, "folk art style." Articles on "how to make folk art" further the public's misconceptions of the ongoing nature of traditional folk art as we understand it (i.e., learned by example in a family or community setting). A whole new genre of magazines is being offered, catering to the public's avowed interest in Americana; these are filled with both articles and advertisements which exalt "folk art" and another phenomenon, "contemporary folk art," or "tomorrow's folk art pieces." Madison Avenue is definitely "into the act" of glorifying —and, not incidentally, selling — folk art, of whatever origin or conception. Thus Dewhurst and MacDowell believe it is the responsibility of scholars and educators to become involved in actively responding to this popularization of folk expression. And they outline specific ways in which to do so.

In using a specific tradition as an example, Elaine Eff describes an unusual form of urban folk art, the painted window screens in Baltimore's ethnic, working class neighborhoods. In "Traditions for Sale: Marketing Mechanisms for Baltimore's Screen Art, 1913-1985," she highlights the experiences of several of the artists with whom she has worked in the last decade. A tradition active since 1913 is now characterized by its own internal marketing system. This was developed naturally, Eff explains, by the artists themselves and by community institutions. These efforts have attracted national attention, which in turn has affected the art form itself.

In "Who Will Market the Folk Arts?" Egle Žygas reminds us that *someone* is doing just that, and will continue to do so in the future. Thus she exhorts us to stress the positive aspects she has found, illustrating for us here by using two Indiana artists as models. Although her perspective comes from and is addressed to public-sector folklorists, she believes it is applicable to everyone.

Robert Teske further expands upon the popularity of the "country chic" movement in his article, "'Crafts Assistance Programs' and

Traditional Crafts." Teske decries the enormous impact such favor has had on crafts assistance programs, crafts cooperatives, traditional craftspersons, and on the general public as well. After reviewing the growth in number and importance of crafts assistance programs and detailing their import, he renews the call of Glassie and Jones for direct, active involvement by folklorists. His many examples provide a clear picture of the deleterious effects of current marketing practices. And he underscores his provocative arguments with a number of practical steps he believes folklorists should — no, *must* — take.

Commentary on these four papers was offered at the Nashville Folk Arts session by Geraldine Johnson and John Michael Vlach, who have summarized their comments for us here. Both emphasize the important fact that marketing the product is integral to the folk artist's rationale: folklorists need to recognize this, and to apply their expertise to expediting the marketing process.

These are not romantic meanderings, nor ones which ignore the artists' financial need. For that need is one which transcends any idealism. Rather it is a stance which takes the long view.[5] All marketing strategies, be they geared to a single artist-to-neighbor trade or a large-scale national advertising blitz, have customer appeal and subsequent sale as their ultimate goal. Popularity grasps, however, but a fleeting moment in history's passing parade of favor. If traditional artists continue to succumb to the many entreaties to change their materials and processes and, finally, products, they will ultimately lose the tradition which originally brought them recognition — and sales.

Or will they? And is it so bad if they do? What do you think?

NOTES

1. See Henry Glassie, "Folk Art," in *Folklore and Folklife*, ed. Richard M. Dorson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), pp. 254-58, for a history of the awareness of folk art. See the reprint of Allen H. Eaton's 1937 *Handicrafts of the Southern Highlands* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1973) for a comprehensive treatment of the development of craft assistance programs.
2. See Nelson H.H. Graburn, ed., *Ethnic and Tourist Arts: Cultural Expressions from the Fourth World* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976) for a comprehensive treatment of the impingement of outside influences on the traditional arts.
3. See, for example, Bradley Hitchings, "Finding Folk Art with a Future," *Business Week*, 30 June 1985, pp. 126-30; my appreciation to Robert Cogswell for this reference.
4. The participants were: Elaine Eff, Marsha Mac Dowell and Kurt Dewhurst, Robert Teske, and Egle Zygas, presenters; Geraldine Johnson and John Vlach, discussants; and Rosemary Joyce, chair.
5. For an elaboration of this thesis, see my "Fame Don't Make the Sun Any Cooler: Traditional Artists and the Marketplace," in *Folk Art and Folk Art Worlds*, ed. John Michael Vlach and Simon J. Bronner (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1986).

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The Marketing of Objects in the Folk Art Style

C. KURT DEWHURST and MARSHA MacDOWELL

If anyone has ever pondered the question "how does a tradition begin?", they will be edified by the October 2, 1983 issue of *The New York Times Magazine*, in which fashion designer Ralph Lauren has provided us with an answer. The copy accompanying the 17-page, four-color spread opened with the line, "Ralph Lauren introduces his first collections of furnishings for the home and a new tradition begins." The advertisement went on to explain that each of the four home furnishing collections had been inspired by the traditions of our American heritage.

Public enthusiasm for the traditions of that heritage and in particular for American folk arts has in recent years become a national popular phenomenon. Fashion designers and trend-setting department stores have mounted advertising campaigns centered on "country-look" or "rustic" themes. Bloomingdale's, a fashion-conscious and trend-establishing store based in New York City, has in recent years conducted a merchandising thrust focused on Kentucky's Appalachian crafts and craftspeople. With help in coordinating the event from Kentucky's first Lady and former Miss America, Phyllis George Brown, Kentucky folk arts were placed solidly in the national media spotlight. Shrewd Madison Avenue advertising agencies have jumped on the folk arts bandwagon and have utilized American folk arts as backdrops in order to market many new products. Influential designers such as Lauren have freely adapted folk art motifs or even copied folk art items outright in an effort to attract a market. Thus if one views the array of popular periodicals currently available for sale at any magazine stand, he or she will be exposed to countless photographic images of quilts, weathervanes and decoys used in advertisements for furniture, clothes, cosmetics, and even homes.[1]

Inside such popular magazines as *Better Homes and Gardens*, *McCalls*, and *Family Circle*, one will also find numerous articles on how to decorate with folk art, how to collect folk art and how to make "folk art." Certainly these kinds of publications have always carried instructions on traditional crafts techniques, but a review of current issues reveals that now an additional emphasis of these articles is on how to create "unique" or "one-of-a-kind" folk art items. Instead of helping to clarify what traditional arts are, these articles reinforce the

misconceptions of folk art as being the creative product of "untutored visionaries."

These same magazines feature articles on another category of what is now being termed folk art. For example, the lead article of the Summer 1983 issue of *Country Home* was entitled "Folk Art in the Making," and examined two Philadelphia College of Art graduates, the Barnetts. This couple is just one of a multitude of skilled, educated craftspeople who are turning out reproductions of folk art as well as new creations in a folk art style which they and others are calling "contemporary folk art." The article opened by explaining,

> While reproductions of Early American folk art are continually being made, few people these days are creating folk art that looks forward — not back — in time. Ivan and Donna Barnett are exceptions to the rule. We'd like to share with you our recent visit to their Pennsylvania studio. Although they don't consider themselves to be folk artists, the Barnetts have become known as such in recent years — he for his weathervanes and other tin and wood figures, and she for her Amish-like quilts, colorful weavings and paper sculptures. The reason for their success is, perhaps, that both maintain a balance in their art between the highly sophisticated and the primitive. It's a combination that imbues their work with a folk-art quality appealing to the connoisseur and child-like." (*Country Home* 1983: 53-60)

A flip through the back pages of magazines such as *Country Living, Early American Life, Yankee* or *Colonial Homes* reveals numerous advertisements for this so-called folk-art produced by skilled and knowledgeable artisans. For instance, one can order "hand-crafted wooden animals patterned from original folk designs" from British Landing Ltd.; "Folk Art Classics" from the American Country Collection; or "Folk Art" from the Carolina Cottage Crafts or the Folk Art Company. One can also order prints of New American Folk Art such as a "charming Rebekka with Doll" done by Eve Smith of the American Folk Art Company, "Girl with Roses" by Judith Neville, or "Girl with a Cat" by Deborah Nikolaus of Folk Peddlers.[2] One can even have Arlene Strader of Folk Art Portraits "limn your likeness." One of her ads reads: "painting done in 1800s costume. Submit 2 or 3 photos, one somber please. Backgrounds may be plain, scenic with pets, etc."[3] Entire mail-order catalogs are now devoted to the marketing of reproductions of historical folk art and what has been called contemporary folk art. Two examples, *Neat and Tidy: Made in America* and *Country Notebook* both advertise a host of such items. A sampling of copy from a *Country Notebook* reads as follows: "The works of Helen Hacker are tomorrow's folk art museum pieces. So rich in detail, her ceramic bells and boxes are made to the highest standards;" "Self-

In the September-October 1983 issue of Colonial Homes, *this advertisement for handmade reproductions of weathervanes was found on page 175. Similar ads are found in the back pages of such magazines as* Country Living, Historic Preservation, *and* Country Life.

J. Whirligig. This expertly handcrafted sailor is ready to give any breeze a whirl. The combination of old wood, copper and a weathered patina evoke a tradition of American folk art. Use indoors or out. Signed. Whirligig will be shipped with the paddles detached. Assembly glue. 15" x 25½"
6887 $178.00
(5.50)

"The combination of old wood, copper and a weathered patina evoke a tradition of American Folk Art" reads the copy in this ad found in the 1982-83 catalogue of gift items from the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

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taught folk artist Robin Gardner of Branson, Mo. weaves her extensive knowledge of American folk art into her animal grapevine wreath;" and "Folk artist Terri Lipman of Dallastown, Pa. creates original folk art inspired by priceless museum pieces. Each is handcrafted in pine and signed by the artist;" and so on.[4]

One does not have to depend on the small ads in the back pages of popular magazines or commercial mail order catalogs for information on where to obtain "folk art" or reproductions. Museums, such as the Smithsonian and the Museum of American Folk Art; historical organizations, such as the National Trust for Historic Preservation; and other public institutions, such as the Library of Congress's American Folklife Center, are all actively engaged in marketing folk art and folk art reproductions through sales counters or mail order catalogs. In the last several years, the Museum of American Folk Art has followed the highly lucrative practice introduced by the Metropolitan Museum of Art: licensing various commercial manufacturers, such as Lane Furniture Company, to reproduce objects or images from its collections.

Individual makers selling their folk art reproductions or contemporary folk art have utilized a wide variety of marketing strategies. Some sell in church bazaars or local art fairs, some place ads in some of the before-mentioned publications, and a few hook up with small businesses such as *Neat and Tidy*. A fall 1983 event called *Country Peddler Show* in Portland, Michigan, was a clear example of the number of artists involved in the production and marketing of these items. A visit there revealed over eighty booths filled with stitched, stuffed, molded, stenciled, woven, hammered, cut and carved items billed as folk art or folk art reproductions.[5] Such shows have become particularly popular in the Midwest.

So, what in the world — you might ask — do Ralph Lauren, Madison Avenue copywriters, Arlene Strader of Folk Art Portraits, Lane Furniture Company's Museum of American Folk Art Collection line and the Country Peddler Show in Portland, Michigan have to do with the study of folk art? All of the above examples of the marketing of objects called folk art or folk art reproductions raise important questions that must be addressed by individuals interested in the scholarly documentation, interpretation, and presentation of folk arts.

Certainly there have been some folklorists who have acknowledged the problems generated by the existence of objects created in a folk art style. For instance, in an article entitled "Traditional Crafts in America," Bruce R. Buckley and Minor Wine Thomas (1966:68) observed that "characteristics of folk crafts have been utilized by modern artists and many times these characteristics have been drawn from techniques that have been rejected by the folk craftsmen." Certainly many of the objects popularly created in the folk style are

often characterized by a crudeness of technique. Michael Owen Jones (1970:206) has added to Buckley and Thomas's observations by noting that, "It would appear that artists and manufacturers are pandering to the public's stereotypes by producing folk-like objects that assume their 'folk' quality from crudity and ineptitude." Jones suggests that this stereotypical view has been mirrored by misinformed notions among "craft program directors, museum personnel and in the academic world . . .many commentators on art create false dichotomies between art in the folk and in the Western elitist traditions and suggest invidious comparisons by the application of terms to folk art such as 'unsophisticated', 'naive', 'crude', and 'inept'. If the general public is informed by experts that folk art is crude and not worthy of serious attention, is it any wonder they have a strange sense of what is genuinely folk art or craft?" (Jones 1970: 206-207). The very existence of objects created in the folk art style, along with the recognition of the responsibility of "experts" in informing the general public, makes it clear that the responsible scholar/educator of folk art study must be prepared to address numerous entities: art created in the folk art style, the folk stylists who created it, the manufacturers who reproduce it, the individuals who market it, and the audience who buys and uses it.

This paper proposes that those who work with folk art and folk artists whether in public sector folklore, in museums, or in basic fieldwork should respond to this popularization of folk expression in the following ways:

1. Careful *documentation* of the alteration, modification, or misinterpretation of folk art traditions. By being able to cite examples of the inaccurate presentation of a folk art form or the complete fabrication of a folk tradition, one can begin to analyze folk art style and folk art stylists.
2. *Presentation of new data* at diverse professional meetings such as the American Association of Museums or the College Art Association to generate further scholarly analysis of folk art study.
3. Support of *formal folk art study* at all levels of education, from elementary school through post-doctoral research. Such programs as folk artists-in-the-schools projects, special national conferences on folk art, and development of sound curricular materials and folk art bibliographies will help strengthen such curricular efforts.
4. Improved *public education* can be achieved by carefully considering the importance of exhibits, demonstrations, and festivals in conveying information to the general public. The critical characteristics of folk expression need to be set out clearly and concisely. Proper interpretation and description is essential. This can be achieved through both written explanation or verbal

description. Labels on objects, background notes in programs and catalogues, and presenters accompanying tradition-bearers in performance situations are all examples of ways to clarify information.

5. *Intervention* by correcting the misuse, misinterpretation, and exploitation of folk artists, folk art traditions and motifs should be attempted. Discussions with buyers, designers, publishers, and merchandisers can have a direct impact, even if that means helping to prepare an accompanying label to an item, underscoring what the object is and how it is only a derivative of a traditional folk object.

6. *Professional guidance and assistance* to artists in particular can help them realize a deeper appreciation of those characteristics that shape the traditional patterns of folk expression. When folk artists are asked by marketers to alter the traditional forms of the artists' work to develop a broader appeal for the object, assistance can be given in describing and supporting the traditional character of the work. Folklorists can help the artist understand the importance of the communicative power of folk art and the cultural values that are inherent in the art — and thereby reinforce adherence to what the artist knows best and does best.

7. Establish a professional *ethical code* or *statement* regarding the popularization of so-called "folk or rustic arts." While it is recognized that the organic nature of folk expression results in subtle and steady changes over time, an attempt could be made to clarify the professional academic community's position on these new products. For example, the American Anthropological Association has taken a stand opposing the sale of pot sherds, fossils, etc., in museum gift shops. The American Association of Museums has a Code of Ethics for museum stores stressing that the selection of objects for sale must be compatible with curatorial goals and collection interpretation (Barsook 1982: 50-52 and Gilbert 1982: 18-23). The American Association of Museums also has a curatorial Code of Ethics and general museum code of ethics that addresses issues such as misrepresentation of information and marketing. While not a major source of the folk art style problem, museum stores and other outlets for traditional folk arts can make a significant educational contribution by thoughtful selection of folk art and careful interpretation of these objects that are for sale. The current state of marketing of these objects made in the popular folk style, and their proliferation, seriously cloud the public's perception of the folk process and their understanding of the true nature of folk art.

Of course all of the above presupposes that the professional academic community is committed to correcting the general

public's understanding of what folk art is. As Jones pointed out: "Regrettably, when ideas are repeated often and forcefully, when the old platitudes are reiterated by each generation, especially by those to whom the public looks for guidance and whose assertions go unchallenged, they easily become 'truth' or 'fact'" (1970: 206-207). The fact is, the American public now has a very misinformed view of what folk art is, as the pages of current popular periodicals have demonstrated. The tremendous increase of popular and commercial attention to folk art, folk stylists, and folk artists demands concurrent attention from those interested in the study of folk art. It is hoped that scholars will be prompted to explore, analyze, and present information about this aspect of folk study. In the final analysis, it will be up to the professional academic community — not Ralph Lauren — to explain to the public just how a tradition begins.

NOTES

This article is based on our joint paper read at the Annual Meeting of the American Folklore Society, Nashville, Tennessee, 29 October 1983.

1. For further discussion of this phenomenon, see MacDowell 1982, Chap. 1.
2. These examples can be found in *Country Living*, April 1983, pp. 122-33, and October 1983, pp. 136-63; and *Colonial Homes*, July-August 1981, pp. 132-44, and September-October 1983, pp. 132-92.
3. This advertisement appeared in *The Clarion*, Fall 1983, p. 86.
4. *Scott and Tyler Made in America* is available at 62 Sickletown Road, West Nyack, New York, 10994. *Country Notebook* is available at 1730 Butter Road, Dover, Pennsylvania 17315.
5. This visit was made on October 15, 1983.

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Traditions for Sale: Marketing Mechanisms for Baltimore's Screen Art, 1913-1985

ELAINE EFF

For the last decade I have been observing, researching and documenting a single folk art form — the landscape-painted, woven wire window and door screens found on the homes of East Baltimore's ethnic, working class neighborhoods. When I began the investigation of this curious but commonplace contemporary phenomenon, it was found in its present form in no other city, and many of the forces influencing the mixed blessing of public exposure and commercialization were non-existent. A number of factors, inspired internally and externally, have played significant roles in the cyclical appreciation and neglect of the screens since their introduction in the early decades of this century.

Painted screens are an unequivocal example of a folk artifact — one that is designed, produced and used (or consumed) within a single community. The intimate community context where creation and consumption intersect is critical to understanding how a practical household decoration could engage no fewer than 100 different artists over a seventy-year period, and visibly enhance the immediate environment of as many as 100,000 homes. No hard sell or promotion was required for this useful and soothing eye-catcher.

The vital Baltimore community which introduced and maintains this thriving (albeit threatened) art form is one of America's most stable residential areas. Its center begins at Baltimore's harbor and has, since the early 19th century, been home to immigrants from the British Isles and Western and Eastern Europe (in that order), who settled here for plentiful employment in the shipping and industrial trades. The overwhelmingly white, multi-ethnic enclave continues to feature modest two and three-story, porchless, owner-occupied, brick (now Formstone-covered) rowhouses which front directly on the public sidewalk.

This urban vernacular housetype, combined with a high percentage of home ownership, is key not only to the enduring livable quality of the neighborhood but also to the longevity of the painted screen tradition. The applied embellishments are a direct outgrowth of the repetitive style of the indigenous architecture and the accompanying lack of privacy found when sidewalk meets building front without any

mediating buffer. Typically, a physical lack and consequent necessity has mothered a new invention.

The East Baltimore community is defined more often by its physical attributes and its residents than by its geographical boundaries. East Baltimore's denizens are characteristically proud, independent and resourceful. Neighborliness, a quality for which its inhabitants are noted, is determined as much by the exigencies of close, urban living as by the desire for domestic harmony.

The existing realities of brick, cement and prefabricated wire cloth were acknowledged and embraced, but also improved upon. Hand-painted landscapes applied to commercially manufactured window and door screens present evidence of the handmade in a plastic world (Graburn 1976:3). Their introduction to Baltimore in 1913 is typical of the communal acceptance of household forms periodically introduced to the inescapably repetitious streetscape. In a real sense, a forward looking aesthetic shared within this community reflects popular styles and changing processes.[1]

The artistic anomaly (which has to be seen in context to be understood best) was the brainchild of an enterprising artist-grocer named William Oktavec. When simmering summer temperatures prevented him from creating his normal outdoor produce displays, he painted on the screen door of his corner store a colorful imitation of the fruits and vegetables sold inside. Typically, for Oktavec and his neighbors, he combined the materials at hand with a pressing need to advertise and preserve his perishable stock, while maintaining a flow of air within.

Prior to wire screens' increased availability after 1910, white or dark green painted, slatted wooden shutters for doors and windows served the complimentary functions of privacy and ventilation. Not always intentional, the closed shutters presented an unfriendly barrier to visible and verbal communication from home or store to the sidewalk or street beyond.

Oktavec, who had historically proven his ability to improve any situation, was familiar with the properties of paint on wire from his years as a demonstrator for a fledgling air-brush manufacturer in New Jersey (Eff 1984:114ff). His first screen for Baltimore was an immediate success. No sooner did his immediate neighbor see the screen, and request a household version, when facsimiles were sought by members of the surrounding Bohemian community. Their attraction to the sylvan scenes copied on request from greeting card graphics was attributable, in inventor Oktavec's words, to their love for their homes and for beautiful things.[2] Perhaps inspired by picturesque Bohemian landscapes, the rapid acceptance of the local art form has been equally attributed to the love of beauty and the time-honored desire to want what others have. "One sees it and another

one wants it, then another . . . The more people out there painting, the more people want them" (Richardson 1982).

During the greatest florescence of painted screens in the 1930s and 1940s, as many as 100,000 windows boasted painted screens during the long spring and summer seasons. Their repetitive presence, however, is seen more as an approval of the *status quo* than as a study in excesses.

Internal forces determined by the built environment, a widely shared aesthetic, and self-generating laws of supply and demand have set in motion the mechanisms for a spiraling number of residents to adopt not only the specially commissioned commodity, but the skills of the screen artist as well, thereby increasing incrementally the numbers of painted screens found on local homes.[3]

The community's internal mechanisms for marketing the screens were a natural outgrowth of their creation. "Marketing" is almost too crass a word to suggest the natural negotiation between homeowner and artist. Long-established neighborhood networks operating out of corner hardware stores, sign painters' studios, basements and art shops constituted the more obvious commercial outlets (Eff 1984; Fig. 1). High school lads in search of weekend date money approached their extended family and neighbors for a quick exchange of painting services for cash. The itinerant artists who came from this or outlying communities solicited work door-to-door, or frequently attracted customers as they selected a fresh-air studio on the sidewalk of a random block. Some painters travelled in sign-bedecked station wagons, and accepted screens and future orders at the resident's behest.

The visibility of the screens on the homes provided the only necessary advertisement (Richardson 1982). Though at first neighbors flocked to the artist-inventor Oktavec, within a short period neighborhood and itinerant screen painters took to the streets in pursuit of business. The Depression years were particularly fruitless for these enterprising types. One no longer needed to ask a willing resident who the artist was, but could find and strike a deal at curbside with the painter himself. The years between 1930 and 1950 witnessed a succession of unidentified artists who left only their painted wire legacies for others to imitate or improve upon.

Difference in style or technique may be evident only to the painters' keen eye for detail. Signatures are scarce, but they are unnecessary since "Everyone's art work is like handwriting. You can tell who it is," according to one artist-observer since the 1920s.[4] The common use of white lead as a highlighting and mixing medium contributed to a long-lasting product and a rare, preserved signature.

Payment has always been in cash upon completion, the price, based

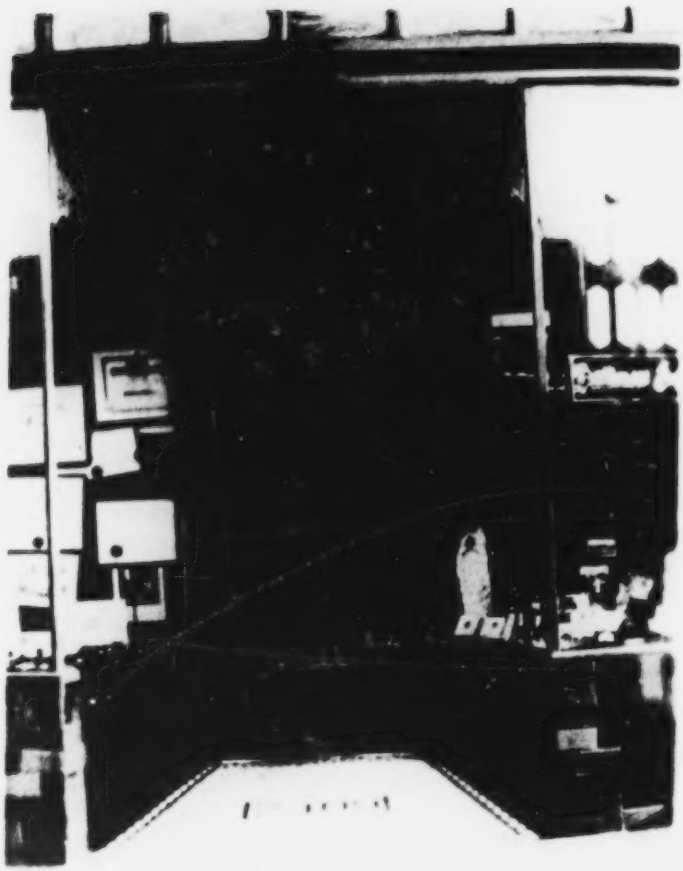


Figure 1.

Oktavec's original Art Shop, established in 1922 and still serving East Baltimore residents, has long been an outlet for painted screens by inventor William Oktavec and his sons (Oktavec family photograph, circa 1925).

64

upon surface size and scene selection, having been determined upon delivery of the screen. It was not necessary to take a cash advance for the work, as the screen was the deposit (Richardson 1982). Due to the unpredictable, seasonal nature of the work, however, a painter never knew from week to week whether business would boom, or bust. To keep up with the demand, to make up for the lulls and to meet the rising costs of paint and brushes as well, the painters were forced to raise their prices over the years. However, they have attempted to keep the cost low for community consumption. A standard rule of thumb for many of these cash-only merchants is: if someone pulls up in a fancy car with out-of-state license plates, they can afford to pay a little more. This sometimes arbitrary act assures that prices to local residents will remain within reach, thus insuring the screens' continued presence there. As one painter boasts, "I fit the bill to the patient" (Eck 1982).

Some of the more enterprising artists have relied on seasonal placement of classified ads in the pages of the neighborhood and outlying areas' weekly newspapers. Residents come to rely on choosing among two or three tempting offers each week. Mother's and Father's Day Specials, Easter Specials, and Specials for no particular reason, have been offered to attract customers and to keep residents apprised of who is still in business. Absence of visible advertising by some painters may not necessarily mean that a painter is not looking for customers, but merely that he relies on other forms of communication to spread news of his existence. Word of mouth has long been considered the most effective publicity. "The screens themselves are the best advertisements," insists octagenarian Ben Richardson, active since the 1930s (Richardson 1982).

In an effort to spread the word, several of the painters have been known to participate in local fairs and festivals, setting up a colorful display of their "exhibition" screens and handing out business cards and flyers while discussing preferences with passers-by (Fig. 2). An actual demonstration can be one of the most effective attractions, as the mystery of painting on holes is effortlessly revealed to skeptics and admirers.

The painters are fully aware of the limits of their market, confined for the most part to the denizens or far-flung residents of East Baltimore, the home of painted screens. Convincing a stranger to rowhouse living of the virtues of landscape-painted screens is not an easy undertaking.

In recent years, however, the interest in painted screens has spread beyond the confines of Baltimore's row house neighborhoods to sophisticated city and suburban dwellers. External influence created by print and recorded media has contributed mightily to renewed but sporadic attention. The ebb and flow of outside interest in the screens

Figure 2.

The annual Highlandtown Harvest Festival provides a pleasant opportunity for screen artists like Tom Lipka to display their work and talk with prospective customers (Elaine Ell photograph, 1982).

has been one of the most unpredictable contributors, and in turn, periodically excites an otherwise stable demand. In anticipation of a recent exhibition, journalists from print media's *The New York Times* and *Washington Post* and television's *Evening Magazine*, as well as both Baltimore dailies and all its networks toasted and lauded this seemingly new discovery.

Within the community, the same publicity serves to bolster the screens' popularity and to validate their continued presence. Friends and relatives who may have moved from the neighborhood call to share their excitement of just having seen "an old friend" in the public spotlight. Orders flood the painters. Faded screens arrive at their front stoops carried by old customers who had just assumed that the practitioners were long gone. And they come requesting the same scene they have equated with painted screens for decades; the cozy red-roofed cottage, though now it may be "the one they saw on television or in the papers."

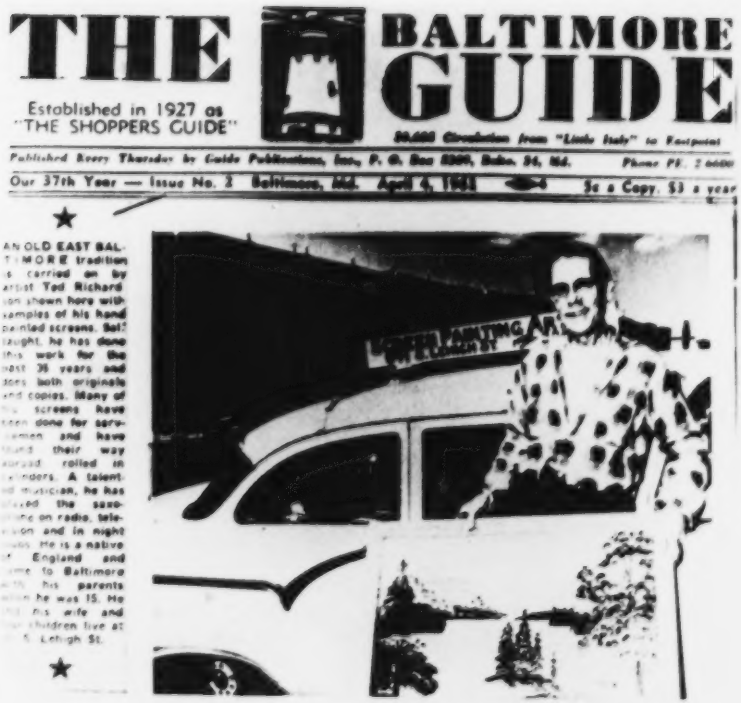
This barrage of publication and media presentations may have been a greater catalyst to change than were those occurring periodically during the seventy year history of the indigenous and community-centered art form.

Prior to the 1940s coverage had been limited to occasional local newspaper and magazine exposure. A national "You Asked for It" episode in the early 1950s featured the 15-minute Oktavec screen; an esoteric art film in the 1960s and a brief moment on public television in the mid-1970s provided temporary limelight for the artists and their captivating form. Within the community, the effect of free publicity causes a flurry of long distance phone calls, mail order requests and unannounced visitors on the painters' doorsteps which may continue for as long as six months.

Since success among the screen painters, is measured in numbers, the number of miles a customer has travelled is of significant note. Visits from Californians and Texans (who may be coincidentally visiting kin in Baltimore) provide important touchstones in determining the painter's personal esteem. Clients from New York or Washington, however, are no less valued.

The promise of ever-increasing revenues and a semi- celebrity status for executing a product that years ago garnered only a dollar or two, has influenced several of the old-timers (ages 70 to 89) to reconsider their retirements as premature. A close examination of the experience of one artist, by way of example, colorfully illustrates stability and growth in the marketing of painted screens.

Former itinerant painter Ted Richardson, who opened the only storefront enterprise exclusively dedicated to painting window and door screens for homes and commercial establishments, maintained his business for a few years during the 1960s (Fig. 3). He didn't enjoy



THE BALTIMORE GUIDE

Established in 1927 as "THE SHOPPERS GUIDE"

Published Every Thursday by Guide Publications, Inc., P. O. Box 5309, Balto. 24, Md.

Our 37th Year — Issue No. 2 Baltimore, Md. April 4, 1963 5c a Copy, $3 a year

AN OLD EAST BALTIMORE tradition is carried on by artist Ted Richardson shown here with samples of his hand painted screens. Self taught, he has done this work for the past 36 years and does both originals and copies. Many of his screens have been done for servicemen and have found their way around rolled in cylinders. A talented musician, he has played the saxophone on radio, television and in night clubs. He is a native of England and came to Baltimore with his parents when he was 15. He and his wife and four children live at [illegible] S. Lehigh St.

Figure 3.

Artist Ted Richardson promoted his work from his storefront as well as from a series of distinctive automobiles that also boasted his skill (photograph courtesy of The East Baltimore Guide, *and Ted Richardson, 1963).*

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being shopbound. He claimed air conditioners were cutting into his market and profits diminished as the cost of materials rose. He moved his materials home and closed the door on that period of his life. After much coaxing, I was finally allowed to enter the inner sanctum of his home — the locked, one-room screen painting studio carved out of his cramped three-room apartment which he shares with his helpmate. There amid shelves and easels were his abandoned paints, brushes, varnishes and custom-designed hanging rack — left impeccably tidy and intact — a virtual shrine to his personal brand of screen art. Over the years, Ted's hands had developed an unmistakable tremble. He was confident he would never paint again. Yet his locked room, a hidden realm of order, sat silently among the more than 80 years of accumulation which had long ago overtaken the rest of his living quarters.

During an extended period of research-residence in the community, I visited Ted often, primarily to record his life-story — that of a brick mason, radio repairman, blue grass and swing band musician, among other endeavors. A nagging concern, and part of my unstated mission, was to reconcile Ted with his younger brother, a former screen painting partner and my friend as well.

My visits with Ted at home and at the senior citizens' center where he lunches daily, enhanced his self-image as well as his public image. Soon he prepared a slide-tape presentation of his screen art for his lunchtime companions. The background music on his tape was his own guitar, banjo and mandolin-picking. Since that first self-inspired show, three editions have ensued. Further, at a festive meeting, Ted presented several of his loyal fans, including myself, with a "first of its kind" miniature painted screen, fabricated, painted and signed by "Ted Richardson, Screen Artist," a stamp redeemed from his earlier career.

These developments may seem more integral to one man's creative biography than to a community marketing scheme. What this heralded, however, was the mounting of that one man's methodical advertising campaign. In carefully premeditated steps, beginning with the public presentation in the fall of the year, Richardson delved into his public past, copying onto slides and tapes his work on screen dating as far back as 1930, along with his recordings as "Ranger Ted" of the Blue Ridge Rangers (a long defunct band). By spring, classified ads in the neighborhood weekly boasted, "Ted Richardson is back." Business began again in earnest. Old customers sought him to replace their aging screens. One client, escatatic to see his name once more, removed the well preserved vintage Oktavec-inspired screens (restored later by Richardson), brought one to him to use as a model on her new vinyl frame screens, and made him vow never to use the design for any other customer.

His unsteady hand is firmer now, particularly when he paints. His

brush control is uncanny. Ted's renewed identity as a screen artist has improved his previously cynical world view and added greatly to his fixed income. Old clients — their names and addresses in meticulously preserved books recording thirty years of productivity — have contacted him again. He is back in business in every sense of the word. But the delicate balance that brings him uncalculated joy has had a crushing effect on the screen painting fortunes of another artist.

Almost at the same moment that Ted's excitement skyrocketed with his rediscovered trade, his estranged brother Ben's steady, although unpredictable, screen business had suddenly and inexplicably plummeted. Never in his forty years of screen painting had he missed a single season. Apparently brother Ted's massive campaign had unintentionally robbed Ben of all his clients. Neighbors unknowingly confused the Richardson brothers (who at one point many years ago worked as a team) and dialed the telephone number conveniently supplied by Ted in his classified ad each week.

To further compound the sibling rivalry and to point out a recent innovative trend: I received a call from Ben following the City's exciting municipal elections, advising me that for his own amusement he had painted a portrait of Baltimore's charismatic Mayor Schaefer on a window screen. Exhibitionist and self-styled entertainer, Ben took the screen to the nearby shopping mall to display it and to confirm his talent through public appreciation. According to Ben, everyone who passed by recognized the familiar face and raved. He called to find out my thoughts on presenting it to the Mayor, a super Baltimore booster and a great fan of neighborhoods, rumored to be longing for his own screen.

Three days later, I checked in with brother Ted. He was elated over recent developments in his growing screen painting business. Exactly three weeks before, in celebration of the tenth anniversary of the senior citizens' lunch program in Baltimore, Ted was asked to paint a screen to present to the Mayor; his choice of subjects: a portrait of Hizzoner!

A year ago, portrait screens were unheard of and suddenly three artists were vying for this unique application of paint on wire. Last fall a young woman screen artist, successful in her formulaic execution of a single bungalow scene which she had learned from an elderly painter, decided to distinguish herself by doing something she believed no other screen painter had attempted: portrait painting on wire. Her several completed commissions, she hoped, would be her key to immortality.

These variations in content are the exception rather than the rule, but they point out the spontaneous yet repetitive nature of creativity in this art form. The predominant motif continues to be the traditional red-roofed bungalow, a storybook image taken not from old world

architecture and memory, but as mentioned above, from unromantic mass-produced greeting cards and calendar art. East Baltimore residents crave the scene because it is "an original," the kind that grandmother and mother in turn, selected. For the most part, the community does not revere, but rather shuns, the cult of individualism. Where sameness prevails, it is heretical to stray too far from the norm. Uniqueness, innovation, originality, in a word, "progress" is rarely the goal of the artist or owners of painted screens. The imagery strives toward an egalitarian mean.

In Baltimore, the screens are not registered as art. They are improved necessity. The painters are not celebrated as artists, but relied upon as suppliers with a special craft, much like plumbers or electricians. These creators of painted wire, in turn, envision themselves as suppliers, though they call themselves "screen artists," and their product "screen art."

However, an "Art Screen" to at least one producer, is one not destined for ordinary use but for display — a step up in the aesthetic and pricing hierarchy (Herget, 1981). The worth of a screen is calculated instead by surface size. Within the community they have no resale value. They can occasionally be found at yard sales or local flea markets. The possibility that one homeowner's discarded screens will fit another's window is slim, but not impossible. As a utilitarian form, their value continues to lie within the row house context.

At this moment, an effort is being launched to establish and maintain a Society for the Preservation of Painted Screens with an adjunct Painted Screen Center, a public facility that will contain a gallery, archive, permanent collection, and classes in screen art. Chronicling a tradition without making provisions for its safeguarding and continuity would have been irresponsible. Located in a municipal building, overseen by neighborhood residents and staffed by screen artists and admirers, it will become a logical extension of the community which is already a living museum.

If the world recognizes them as art, while the community in which they thrive considers them embellished necessity, the screens will inevitably be considered art by metamorphosis (Graburn 1976). The passage of time and the enhancement by print, media, exhibition or promotion adds a patina to the artifact which in a sense reshapes the article. Standards and preferences change as well over time, allowing for a reappraisal of the artifacts.

What it is called and by whom is far less important than that it *is* and that it continues. Recently Johnny Eck an ebullient 72-year old artist, active since his childhood as a student of the great Oktavec, shared with me his latest, and to him, most amusing commission. One of his neighbors had requested that her front window screen be emblazoned with five Smurfs (trademark), a popular cartoon creation and plush

toy with which he was understandably, unfamiliar. This strange challenge, he agreed, could be met only with the help of friends to describe the development of the toddlers' cult (focusing on the blue and white Smurf and Smurfette population known worldwide, in every known medium). The Smurf had thus become ubiquitous if not traditional, through dogged persistence and superlative public relations.

As screen painter Eck set out to locate glassware and coloring book images to adapt to the humble wire screen, I was reminded that the lesson here might aptly apply to the subject as well as the artistic medium: it is not traditions that die, only businesses.[6]

NOTES

The ideas presented here have developed over the years through informal conversations and interviews with screen painters, screen owners and other community observers. Beyond the confines of East Baltimore, I owe a special debt to Henry Classie whose insightful comments regarding creativity and consumption have informed this study.

1. The visible effects of communal acceptance of household embellishments are evident in random blocks in the repeated use of awnings, wrought iron railings, re-oriented stoops, door and window renovations and the ubiquitous Formstone, a much imitated man-made stone available after World War II through the 1960s and, like many of these products, sold by door-to-door salesmen.
2. William Oktavec always maintained that the residents' love for their homes and their beauty was the overwhelming reason for the repetitive selection. When he left the East Baltimore rowhouse neighborhood, he ironically moved to a red-roofed bungalow which he was quick to immortalize on screen for his son Albert's suburban home. See *The Baltimore Sun* March 18, 1938, p. 28.
3. In the earliest years, the popular "greenwood" and oak-grained frame for the custom fitted window screen was made at home or in a local hardware store. Since window sizes varied from house to house, it was necessary for the homeowner to supply the screen painter with his own screen and frame.
4. With only two known exceptions, namely painters Ted Richardson and Joseph Scogna (who died in 1966), a signed window screen has been rare until recently.
5. For information on The Painted Screen Society of Baltimore, a non-profit educational institution which opened to the public in late 1985, contact Elaine Eff, 724 S. Ellwood Avenue, Baltimore, Md. 21224.
6. Reported by John Szwed as having been stated in *Rolling Stone* (Fall 1983) by Malcolm McLaren, former manager of the Sex Pistols, a contemporary New Wave band.

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Who Will Market the Folk Arts?

EGLE VICTORIA ŽYGAS

No matter what his or her field of specialization may be, today's responsible folklorist is as concerned with the bearers of tradition as with folk tradition itself. Because revivalists are playing "folk" music, librarians holding storytelling hours, weekend handymen building log houses from kits, and women learning to quilt at adult education classes, it has become vital for the folklorist to know not only *who* is singing the song, telling the tale, or making the object, but also *how* these individual performers, artists, and craftspersons learned their skills. If they have indeed learned by word of mouth or customary example, the folklorist then determines the individuals' places in their own community as well as the community's evaluation of their art.[1] These findings, field notes, photographs, films, or tapes most often end up in a public or academic repository where they become a resource for future research.

To the folklorist working in the public sector, identification and documentation are only the first part of the job. Next comes the need to make the folk arts and artists thus discovered somehow accessible to the public. Demonstrations, workshops, and exhibits have been the prime formats for presenting material folk culture to a broader audience. Involvement of a folklorist as fieldworker/presenter ensures the artists' being legitimate traditional artists, presented to the public in a sensitive manner. Support of the funding agency means that even though no admission need be charged, the artists will still receive an honorarium, plus the attention of strangers, and, possibly, elevated status among their own peers because of the exposure. The public, meanwhile, sees the process of the folk arts and learns that some people actually do still make baskets, weave rugs, or carve canes. Additionally, demonstrations, workshops, and exhibits are well-defined projects: everything from fieldwork to presentation can be accomplished relatively quickly — this means a one-time grant will suffice, rather than continued support — and there is a recognizable end-product which can be experienced by a large number of people. This combination of factors makes such events attractive to the staff of funding agencies, who have limited numbers of dollars to allocate.

As admirable as these presentations often are, it is troubling to

realize that after they are completed, the folk artists go back to their regular routine and the fieldworker/presenter is out of a job until the next such opportunity arises. Sporadic employment of this sort can quickly lose its fascination and suitable permanent employment is sought.[2] Recently, those of us who choose to work outside academe or government have begun to look for positions in non-profit arts, educational, and social service organizations or for-profit corporations and businesses having goals with which we are philosophically allied — e.g., to foster multicultural understanding, settle immigrants and refugees, alleviate poverty, — and with whom we believe we will have a chance to use the cultural awareness and sensitivity provided us by our folklore training. Our entry into this kind of work is so recent, and so few precedents exist for us to follow, that we constantly wonder whether we are being sufficiently sensitive, aware, and involved with the folk artists, their art, and their tradition.

The spectres of attempts-gone-wrong dance before our eyes, and we worry about repeating the mistakes of the past. A well-known example is the Southern Highland Handicrafts Guild, whose laudable goal was to improve the economic status of craftspersons in post-Depression Southern Appalachia. One way it proposed to do this was by offering the services of textile designers to work with traditional weavers whose designs, color schemes, and styles were "not in vogue" (see Eaton 1937). Another more recent example is the current marketing of Kentucky crafts in major department stores throughout the nation and abroad. Once again marketing experts are dictating to the craftspeople which designs, colors, and styles will sell.[3]

We wonder if *we* can do a better job at marketing our skills, our understanding of folk culture, and the folk arts themselves without disrupting tradition, unduly influencing the artist, or changing the art. In short, can we market folk culture without "selling out"?

According to my dictionary, marketing is defined as "all business activity involved in the moving of goods from the producer to the consumer, including selling, advertising, packaging, etc."[4] The producer, naturally, is the folk artist, the goods are folk art, and the consumer is the wider audience. Although there are folk artists who market their own work (as well as artists who will not part with their work), my concern here is with those artists who are marketed by another person or agency. The following examples are presented as positive models of that kind of marketing activity.

John McAdams is a third-generation (at least) basketmaker in Southern Indiana who was 81 years old when I visited him in 1981.[5] He works with white oak which grows in the woods surrounding his home, splitting the wood down to the proper thickness, whittling it to the proper shape, and weaving the baskets (with the help of his wife) for sale in the general store in Leavenworth, Indiana. This store is his

only outlet.

It used to be that Mr. McAdams made the entire basket from oak. Recently, because of difficulty in finding white oak that will yield long-enough splits, he has started making extensive use of store-bought caning material; although the staves, rim, base, and handle are still oak, the body of the basket is woven from cane. Mr. McAdams is indisputably a folk craftsman: he practices the traditional skill passed on in his family. The baskets he weaves are folk artifacts: the form is traditional (the baskets I bought in 1981 are nearly identical to "the last basket taken in trade" at the store, made in the 1930s by McAdams' grandmother), the innovation in materials was internally motivated (Mr. McAdams adapted to the inaccessibility of his customary oak by simply substituting other, similar materials which were available), and this change is accepted by his community.

John McAdams' baskets are marketed very successfully at the Leavenworth general store. I know, because the window filled with baskets of all sizes caught my eye as I was speeding by, late for an appointment down the road. The visual impact of the baskets in the window is enough to bring tourists into the store where, once in, they find every available rafter hung with baskets, and baskets squeezing out the other merchandise on the shelves. Also, the clerk's testimony that these genuine Southern Indiana baskets, made by a third-generation basketmaker, and available only in this store, combined with the mute testimony of the artifact itself (the fifty-year old basket sits prominently on a shelf, and all the recent baskets are signed and dated by the maker), as well as the reasonable cost ($30 for a 12" diameter basket, $10 for a 6" one) make it difficult to resist buying one. I know, because I bought four. Granted, folklorists shopping for folk art are a special case, but how many baskets can a town the size of Leavenworth possibly need? There are less than 150 families, the owner of the store buys each basket Mr. McAdams brings to him, no matter how many of the baskets may be in stock at the moment. And eventually, each basket is sold.

"Anna Bock" is the pseudonym used by folklorist Simon Bronner for an Old Order Mennonite painter in Northern Indiana, with whom he worked from 1977 to 1979 (Bronner 1979). Anna Bock has a handicap which does not allow her to work outside the home, so she supports herself by painting on glass and wood in the Mennonite tradition. These painted wares are sold to other Mennonites who use them as souvenirs or gifts for children when visiting other church districts. In 1964 Miss Bock began to do "genre paintings" (depictions of everyday life) on canvasboard. Her customers for these scenes include the Amish and "Old" Mennonites for whom she paints images of their farmsteads, plus "New" Mennonites to whom she sells some small paintings, as well as outsiders who buy larger examples of the maple-

sugaring, buggy drives, farm life, and similar scenes. Miss Bock's paintings on canvasboard come from her dissatisfaction with depictions of her community's lifestyle by outsiders and are realistic portrayals of the life of the plain folk in Elkhart County, Indiana. The farmhouses are all two-room deep, two-story buildings with a central chimney and a front porch; they are painted white and have green shades in the windows. The black buggies in her paintings are the closed-top style typical for her church district, with the fluorescent orange "slow-moving vehicle" sign faithfully depicted on their rear. The people (whose faces are never distinct) are dressed in the plain colors and plain cut seen in the region. The scenes depict events from Old Order Mennonite life. Whatever Miss Bock's personal preference may be, she is keenly aware of what will sell and stocks the type of scene her customers want.

When I visited Miss Bock in 1980, the situation was the same as Bronner had described, but when I returned nine months later it had changed radically.[6] Her handicap, a degenerative bone disease, had required several operations and hospitalization in Indianapolis; the money earned from her painting sales would now be paying her doctor bills. A local gallery owner began to supply her with stretched canvas (rather than the canvasboard she had been using), a better quality of acrylic paint, and good brushes. She also encouraged Miss Bock to try painting on paper. The paintings done in these materials and sold through the gallery averaged $120 each, whereas those sold in Miss Bock's home with her accustomed materials cost $50 or less.

Anna Bock is considered a folk artist because she is working in a painting tradition which has precedents among American Mennonites (Bronner 1979:15). Tradition is likewise apparent in her subject matter (the farmstead) and in artistic convention (the blurred faces on her people recall the religious proscription against graven images). Community values are expressed in the themes she paints, and the correctness of Anna Bock's artistic vision is affirmed by her community each time a member buys her work. The change in materials, though externally motivated and inconsistent with community values, affects only those paintings which are sold outside the community.

Anna Bock's paintings are being marketed successfully through the gallery. Located just one block behind Goshen's busy Main Street and just across the road from Yoder's Restaurant (the place to go for excellent regional specialties), the gallery is very well situated. Miss Bock's paintings are set up in its front window, visible to customers coming in or out of the restaurant. The gallery specializes in prints, drawings, and paintings by local artists. Miss Bock's paintings are presented as if they were elite art, mounted in art frames or behind glass. Yet, the $120 price tag makes her work affordable to tourists

wishing to mark their visit to Indiana's "Amish country" through the acquisition of something tonier than a factory-made hex sign or plastic refrigerator magnet.

It is obvious that in their respective sales arrangements neither Mr. McAdams nor Miss Bock is being taken advantage of or exploited. In fact, one could say that both the artists and their art are thriving because of the arrangement: John McAdams continues to make baskets and to sell them through the general store because, after three generations of basketmaking and three generations of selling them in the Leavenworth store, he knows that all his baskets will always be accepted by the storeowner whom he trusts to pay him a fair price; Anna Bock is pleased to have the gallery take over the marketing of her work: it brings a higher price there, assuring the payment of her bills, and also relieves her of such problems as explaining to insistent weekend travellers that her church absolutely forbids the transaction of business on the Lord's Day.

The owners of the general store and of the gallery have been successful both in establishing a beneficial relationship with the folk artists and in marketing the artists' work. The marketing experts of the Southern Highlands Handicraft Guild and the Kentucky crafts program have been less so. All four of these cases are similar in that the goods move from producer to consumer; the dissimilarity, however, is in the direction of the casual arrow. In the case of the Handicrafts Guild and the Kentucky crafts, the first move taken by the experts was to determine what people would buy; the second was to have the craftspeople make that product. With the general store and the gallery, the first step was to see what the artists were making; the second was to have the public *want* to buy it. They accomplished that simply by presenting the baskets and paintings as fine examples of folk art: handmade, embodying local traditions, unavailable elsewhere, and therefore desirable. This marketing approach works adequately when one is assured of a steady stream of customers, ready to buy.

Sometimes, however, one or more other factors obtain: the art form is one for which public awareness and appreciation is small; the maker is so excellent or the process so time-consuming that a fair price for the work is higher than the general public can afford; or the artist requires continuous sales in order to subsist. In these more difficult situations, the guiding principle remains the same: the folk artist is the specialist in his or her art form and is to be respected as such. It then becomes the responsibility of the artist's agent to educate the public.

We all know folk artists who would like to sell their products, but we unwittingly do them a disservice: the only people with whom we discuss their art are other folklorists, and the only place we document their art form is in journals that only folklorists read or ephemeral leaflets put out for a one-time, one-day festival. Meanwhile,

marketing experts continue to tell traditional craftspeople that what they make is fine, but that it just won't sell if it isn't a certain size, style, pattern, or color. Further, such wares continue to be sold in the big stores as the folk art they no longer are. Unless we do more writing about the folk arts as we know them in targeted marketing places, (e.g., museum catalogues and newsletters, popular publications on art, crafts, interior design, and tourism), and unless we initiate contact with people involved in marketing (e.g., major museums, galleries, art dealers and collectors, interior designers, etc.), we are simply playing a game by someone else's rules. Isn't it time we remembered that many of us call ourselves *public*-sector folklorists? Isn't it time for us to go public with the folk artists and their art?

NOTES

1. "Authenticity, excellence, and significance of the folk artist within the particular artistic tradition" have become codified through their mention as the criteria for the *National Endowment for the Arts National Heritage Fellowships*. See National Endowment for the Arts 1983a. Although previously unstated, these same criteria have been used by folklorists throughout the world working in all areas of folkloristics.
2. This situation, apparently endemic to public sector folklorists, is particularly well expressed in National Endowment for the Arts 1983b.
3. I am indebted to Robert L. Teske for this information.
4. "Market." *Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language* (New York: World Publishing Co., 1972), p. 898.
5. My field log entry for 13 August 1981. This information and that in note 6 (below) was collected while I was folk arts coordinator at the Indiana Arts Commission under a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts Program. A copy of these notes is on file at the Arts Commission offices in Indianapolis.
6. My field log entries for 11 December 1980 and 25 September 1981.

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"Crafts Assistance Programs" and Traditional Crafts

ROBERT THOMAS TESKE

In his 1970 article "Folk Art Production and the Folklorist's Obligation," Michael Owen Jones offered the following evalation of crafts programs in Appalachia:

> Such humanitarian causes are not to be disparaged, for certainly they have been effective in adding extra money to the incomes of hundreds, and over the years, thousands of individuals. I would only point out that it is often a characteristic of these programs that the mountain people who are aided are not the folk craftsmen nor are the products examples of folk art production properly conceived. All too often college-trained craftsmen or art teachers impose their values and expectations on the local people who find them alien, or directors of craft programs fail to comprehend the nature of folk art . . . (1970: 190).

Three years earlier, in a footnote to his article "William Houck, Maker of Pounded Ash Adirondack Pack-Baskets," Henry Glassie commented in a similar vein: "Most handcraft groups, while laudably humanistic, cannot resist exploiting and 'giving direction to' — tinkering harmfully and tastelessly with — folk crafts" (1967: 53-54).

In response to these unfortunate circumstances, both Glassie and Jones advocated a policy of involvement and action on the part of folklorists. Glassie noted:

> Assistance to genuine traditional crafts should be limited to marketing, for more can be culturally and psychologically disruptive. The generally sad results of programs of assistance to American folk craftsmen is partially the fault of the scholar's fear of becoming involved in anything but scholarship. We folklorists must apply ourselves to locating, studying in detail, and then — why not? — helping the remaining folk craftsmen (1967: 53-54).

Jones proposed that "the folklorist can aid individual craftsmen directly by finding markets for their products and by demonstrating that they can successfully increase their prices." Beyond that, he recommended that we should make our data available in order to

educate museum personnel-and the general public about American folk art production (1970: 203).

Over the fifteen-year period since these initial calls for action were issued, a number of folklorists have responded to the recommendation that they address their scholarship on traditional crafts to a broader public, but few have heeded the suggestions of Jones and Classie that they should become directly involved in the marketing of folk arts and crafts.[1] Even the enormous growth of public sector folklore activity over this same period has generated far more in the way of public educational programs than programs of direct assistance to craftsmen. The relative inaction of folklorists in this area, and various social, economic and political factors which could not have been anticipated in the late 1960s, have resulted in an increasingly important role in the current marketing structure of American folk arts and crafts for the very crafts assistance programs which Classie and Jones decried. Unfortunately, the impact of these newly ascendant crafts programs and cooperatives on traditional crafts, on traditional craftsmen and women, and on the general public has often been deleterious, though the organizations themselves have frequently been motivated by the noblest of intentions. It is the purpose of this paper to review the factors contributing to the rapid growth in number and importance of crafts assistance programs over the last decade and a half; to suggest the kind of impact they have had upon folk crafts and craftspersons; and to renew the call of Jones and Classie for direct, active involvement by folklorists in the marketing of traditional arts and crafts on various levels.

Perhaps the most significant factor underlying the growth of crafts programs in the last fifteen years has been the enormous increase in popularity of the "American country look" with interior designers, department store buyers, and the public which they influence. This popularity has been attributed to different causes by various experts in the field. In a 1982 *Washington Post* article entitled "A New Generation in American Style," Robert Bishop, director of the Museum of American Folk Art, associates the resurgent interest in Navajo rugs, Kentucky earthenware, and Adirondack twig furniture with the Bicentennial, while Washington antiques dealer Marston Luce identifies the Whitney Museum of American Art's exhibition "The Flowering of American Folk Art" as a key catalyst. Whatever the cause of the "country chic" movement's popularity, its economic impact is unquestionable. To quote the same article:

> Last year, The Hecht Co. sponsored a 'West Virginia, USA' promotion which sold $42,000 worth of crafts in 10 days. . . . And this fall, Bloomingdale's which has spotlighted goods from India to Ireland, spent $25 million on 800 new U.S. sources for a two-month

America the Beautiful promotion . . . (Koncius 1982).

While a cooperative like Cabin Creek Quilts may have begun as a Vista project involving seven rural West Virginia counties in 1970, and while MATCH (Marketing Appalachia's Traditional Community Handcrafts), a "cooperative of cooperatives," may have grown out of a 1974 project of the Commission on Religion in Appalachia, such charitable support could never have provided the economic benefits which the current commercial popularity of country crafts has afforded organizations of this type.

A second factor leading to the recent increase in the number of crafts programs has been more a social than an economic one. The influx into the United States of substantial numbers of Southeast Asian refugees who have brought along as one of their few possessions an extraordinary needlework tradition has prompted the formation of a number of cooperatives, mutual assistance programs, and women's textile enterprises to market especially Hmong embroidery and reverse applique. The 1983 report of the Refugee Women in Development Project of the Overseas Education Fund provides information on twenty-five such organizations, primarily locally-based and dispersed across the country from Providence to San Diego and from Houston to Seattle. Many are sponsored or assisted by church groups or private foundations, much as the earlier Appalachian programs mentioned above were supported, and the majority list their goals as "cultural preservation, marketable skills and income generation" (1983: Part II, 10 ff.).

A third factor contributing to the burgeoning of crafts programs during the seventies and early eighties has been the recognition by public figures of the political advantage to be gained from the highly visible marketing of the crafts products of their particular states. Thus, West Virginia's Department of Culture and History sponsors a crafts marketing program with the strong support of the state's First Lady, Sharon Percy Rockefeller. Similarly, Phyllis George Brown, wife of Kentucky Governor John Y. Brown, has spearheaded a very aggressive campaign aimed at marketing the state's crafts through major department stores such as Bloomingdale's, Marshall Field's, and Nieman-Marcus; through crafts markets held in Louisville and at the Kentucky Horse Park; and through a publication entitled *Handcrafted in Kentucky: A Directory of Kentucky Craftspeople*. It must be admitted that such programs have benefited some of the states' craftspeople considerably — and are certainly intended to do so. However, such clues as the presence of Mrs. Brown's photograph, rather than the craftperson's, on the sales tags of articles in Bloomingdale's OH! KENTUCKY boutiques, do suggest the equally political motives of the Kentucky Arts and Crafts Foundation (Kentucky Department of the Arts 1983).

As might be expected, given the multiple and various motivations

and goals of the crafts assistance programs under consideration, the impact of their efforts upon traditional artists and craftsmen and upon the folk arts and crafts has not been entirely positive. Several examples will suffice to suggest the nature and extent of the damage being done, as well as the absence of malice with which it has at least occasionally been accomplished.

As a first case, the affiliation of the Freedom Quilting Bee of Alabama with the Artisan's Cooperative is illustrative of the delicacy required in providing a local group an expanded market. Begun in 1967 with the assistance of Francis X. Walter, an Episcopal priest and the director of the Selma Inter-Religious Project, the Freedom Quilting Bee Cooperative was intended to provide some financial security to the black people of the Gees Bend and Alberta areas. While early success in the New York high fashion market brought with it quality and size standards and the alteration of designs and materials, the more recent affiliation of the Freedom Quilting Bee with Artisans Cooperative has led to the introduction of further restrictions and modifications. The situation is perhaps best summarized by the following quotation from Janet Strain McDonald's "Quilting Women" in the catalog *Black Belt to Hill Country*:

> For several years they have been a member of the Artisans Cooperative of Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania, which markets their quilts throughout the country and specifies the color-coordinated fabrics pieced into each quilt top. Unlike ten years ago, the women no longer make personal color choices. Patterns are also designated by Artisans Cooperative, and the wide range has been narrowed to five best sellers: Rainbow, Grandmother's Dream, Grandmother's Choice, The Coat of Many Colors and Bear's Paw. Young also mentioned that their traditional pattern names were modified by the Chadds Ford enterprise — Joseph's Coat sells as Coat of Many Colors and Trip Around the World became Grandmother's Dream. Although one quilter admitted that she grows tired of always having her colors chosen for her, the women are not resentful of the confines placed upon them. Modifying a longstanding folk tradition is unimportant to the women compared with the financial security a steady wage provides (1981: 23).

Note that Artisans Cooperative is a not-for-profit, tax exempt organization seeking: to provide employment alternatives to its rural members; to reverse the "ancient exploitation by middlemen" of artisans far from their markets; and to entrust cooperative members with a majority voice on its board of directors. The unfortunate impact

of its national marketing program upon the quilts and quilters of the Freedom Quilting Bee is, therefore, all the more unsettling because of its inadvertence.

A good example of the impact of the crafts assistance programs upon traditional craftspeople and their work can be drawn from "Artists, Artisans and Entrepreneurs: Diversification in Refugee Women's Textile Enterprises in the U.S.," the 1983 report of the Refugee Women in Development Project referred to above. The development of new product lines and the channels through which these are marketed are described as follows:

> Few groups limited themselves to selling only traditional *pa ndau:* most seemed to have the greatest success with fashion accessories or home furnishings adapted to American tastes and selling for under $20 at local shops or at public affairs . . . (1983:6).

Subsequently the fashion accessories and home furnishings to which Hmong needlework skills have been applied include such items as eyeglass cases, pincushions, and Christmas ornaments. Further adaptations to American tastes have involved shifting from traditionally bright colors to blues, browns and neutrals, as well as a decreased use of detailed cross-stitch to reduce prices. It is clear, then, that traditional forms and their levels of complexity are as much subject to the influence of crafts programs' efforts as are the ranges of pattern repertoire and uses of regionally appropriate pattern names.

A final example of the problems implicit in the large-scale marketing of traditional crafts to a public less concerned with the authenticity of the craft than with the prestige of the store promoting it, is provided by the following quotations from Bloomingdale's officials regarding the Kentucky crafts they sell.

> 'We come in and see something fabulous, like those wonderful pitchers,' said Margo Rogoff, publicity director. 'They've always been pitchers, but we take them and make them into lamps. We also had colors and patterns — colors that were popular last year, such as the pale blues and mauves — so lots of our candles were those colors. And in some of the baskets, strips of pink and the wonderful blues were woven in (Reynolds 1982).

Or, to quote David Long, the head of Bloomingdale's OH! KENTUCKY boutique:

> The appeal of Kentucky crafts, Long said, is that they offer 'traditional age-old techniques and mediums that people are very comfortable with. What we've tried to do is give them a new slant — recolor them in a

> non-traditional way. Kentucky potters are encouraged to discard their dark, earth-tone glazes for pastels more to Bloomingdale's liking.
>
> 'We felt that was a way to make traditional crafts fresh-looking,' Long said (Cogswell 1983).

What seems like a process of renewal and revivification to the retailing professional strikes the folklorist as unacceptable outside interference reflecting an undervaluation of the traditional art form and the traditional artist. Indeed, in the case of the Hmong needleworkers mentioned above who are being urged to alter their patterns and palates to American tastes, and in the case of Kentucky's potters and basketmakers who are being persuaded to abandon their white oak splits and brown glazes for pastels, a process very similar to that described by Nelson Graburn as affecting Fourth World ethnic artists is exerting an insidious negative influence. As Graburn states:

> In the headlong rush to please the tourists and the taste-makers the artisan finds himself in danger of surrendering control of his product. Where this has occurred, it is no longer *his* art, it is *ours*. He is now subject to our manipulations and our aesthetic whims. It is our concepts of 'authentic ethnic identity' that will be manufactured and distributed (1976: 32).

In most of the cases just described, and in many other instances of craft programs intentionally or unintentionally working harm upon traditional crafts and craftspeople while simultaneously providing them additional income, folklorists have had little or no role whatsoever. This, I would submit, is at once to our credit and to our shame. To our credit, in that we have not been responsible for orchestrating any of these programs with their deleterious results. To our shame, in that we have not made much effort to improve them, to prevent them, or even to criticize them. Though our training, our experience and our expertise should have alerted us to the consequences, we have over the last fifteen years allowed various crafts programs to impose outside aesthetic criteria upon traditional artists, to introduce standards of quality control designed to produce commercial sameness, and to undermine the confidence of folk artists and craftsmen in their ability to judge what is good and beautiful. Further, we have allowed marketing organizations, museum-approved reproduction programs and other commercial enterprises to continue to confuse the general public about the distinctiveness, complexity and availability of authentic folk arts and crafts. I would suggest, as Glassie and Jones did some ten to fifteen years ago, that it is time for folklorists to become involved in the area of marketing and promoting traditional arts and crafts, and that this involvement must take various forms and be addressed to various audiences if it is to be

effective.

On the most basic level, we must continue to work with and for traditional artists and craftspeople. In addition to reinforcing their commitment to the folk arts and crafts through our encouragement and attention, we must be prepared to protect those who would continue to produce entirely within and for their own communities.[2] However, we must also be prepared to advise those who would look to the outside world about the advantages and disadvantages of new marketing and distribution systems; to discuss the impact that association with such networks and organizations might have upon the pace, style and quality of their work and their life; and even to assist in finding answers to vexing legal and tax questions. Furthermore, we must continue to assist in the development of the type of small-scale, local marketing opportunities that Jones described in 1970, for these are the simplest, most direct mechanisms for providing a degree of financial security, as well as the least disruptive for the craftspeople themselves. And, even further, I believe we should begin the planning and development of larger-scale marketing programs which will better serve traditional artists, better inform the general public, and better balance the overly-commericalized approach currently taken by some crafts programs and other suppliers. Whether organized on local, state, regional or national bases, such programs would recognize and celebrate the integrity of the folk arts and crafts; seek to inform the general public of this integrity through mechanisms like labeling, carefully prepared promotional literature, workshops and demonstrations; and attempt to offset the overabundance of poorly-made imitations, adaptations and reproductions of American folk arts with the authentic traditional arts and crafts still being produced — and overlooked — in many of our communities. Models are available to us in the form of national programs in a number of Central and South American countries, such as Mexico's Fonart; in the recently released mail-order jewelry catalog of the Zuni Craftsmen Cooperative, developed with the assistance of the Center for Indain Economic Development; and in the Hmong handcraft program of the Utah Friends of the Refugee League and the Folk Arts Program of the Utah Arts Council. A number of the potential objections to folklorists' becoming involved in such marketing efforts (objections based on romantic notions of traditional crafts as non-commercial and entirely community-supported) were successfully addressed by Michael Ower Jones in his 1970 article. Furthermore, I think we can dismiss even more pragmatic concerns about our own lack of business acumen and marketing experience when our expertise regarding the arts and crafts and the host of available economic advisory services are taken into consideration. We have ignored the call to provide direct assistance to traditional artists

and craftsmen for too long. Now is the time to intensify and expand our efforts on their behalf.

Short of the immediate creation of a range of programs for marketing folk arts and crafts, there remains a number of more modest but highly beneficial methods for assisting traditional artists. Perhaps the most obvious of these is to provide our expertise and perspective to those already-established, well-intentioned crafts assistance programs which sincerely wish to better serve their folk artists. We might well help these programs to develop innovative techniques to insure the availability of materials, to preserve the artists' right to select and vary designs and materials, and to maintain a necessary inventory without over-burdening individual artists. Conversely, we must also be prepared to voice our criticisms of those programs which do folk art and folk artists a disservice and which refuse our proffered assistance. To hang back in either case — to refuse our assistance or to withhold our criticism — is equally irresponsible and will lead only to a further compounding of the present situation.

The final method for assisting traditional artists and craftspeople which requires our attention is that which Jones identified as "the main function of the folklorist, that of educating the general public by investigating contemporary folk craft production and by making available his research findings" (1970:196). By using the popular press and the mass media, as well as scholarly publications, we are in a position to clearly define for a broad audience what is meant by the terms "folk art" and "folk craft" and to explain the distinctive communal aesthetic, depth of tradition and informal transmission process associated with the folk arts. Only in this way, by addressing the general public as well as the crafts programs and the traditional craftspeople themselves, can we hope to succeed in improving the status of America's folk arts and crafts and in meeting the "folklorist's obligation" pointed out nearly fifteen years ago.

1. Recent examples of folklorists writing for larger audiences on the subject of traditional arts and crafts include articles by Suzi Jones (1982), John Eilertsen (1982), and Maude Southwell Wahlman (1982) in the special issue of *Crafts International* entitled *Folk Arts: Currents and Crossovers*, as well as an interview of John Burrison by Lisa Reynolds (1983) entitled "Folk Art: A Folklorist's Opinion." Among the relatively small number of folklorists who have been actively involved in marketing traditional crafts are J. Roderick Moore, Director of the Blue Ridge Institute of Ferrum College, Ferrum, Virginia, and Geraldine Johnson whose experiences marketing rag rugs from western Maryland are recounted in her article "Folklorist as Rag Rug Entrepreneur" (1982).

2. Regarding the "protection" of traditional craftspeople, see especially McLean 1981.

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VOL. XII, Nos. 1-2, 1986

Commentary

Geraldine Johnson:

My personal exeriences with women's rag rug marketing in the Washington, D.C. area have given me a new outlook on this whole subject. In 1981 I became a one-person marketing team — entrepreneur, financier, truck driver, and warehouse grunt — dragging woven rag rugs from the homes of approximately twenty weavers and depositing them with retailers at the Smithsonian Institution, Library of Congress, Bloomingdale's, and other craft outlets.[1] During the many hours I spent in my van covering almost 2,000 miles a month, I pondered many of the same issues raised by these papers. In the final analysis, I agree with those of my colleagues who urge professional folklorists to be more involved in a vigorous crafts marketing program, and I will use my experience to expand upon that theme.

First, I must side with those folklorists who suggest that some of us have been derelict in our professional responsibilities by not becoming more involved in helping traditional craftspersons sell their crafts. I believe that it is our ignorance of business procedures and our peculiar prejudice against the marketplace, rather than our ethical standards, that keep us from such involvement. Many of the distortions of craft traditions so carefully documented by these writers and other researchers occur also in other genres in other presentational formats — for example, festivals and audio or video recordings. Yet the profession has long seen fit to support these methods of communicating with an eager public.

Robert Teske's description of the distortions that took place in the marketing of the Freedom Quilting Bee quilts are certainly the stuff of folklorists' nightmares. We have a particular responsibility to see that these aberrations do not continue. We must develop our sensitivity to the craft and the marketing process. For the absence of organized commercial ventures does not insure the purity of the craft. I documented distortions similar to those Teske describes while researching Blue Ridge quilts; these changes took place without specific intervention, but instead as a natural result of the recent quilting revival.[2]

Many of the problems discussed here can be avoided if the professional involved is knowledgeable about and sensitive to the craft

and the dynamics of the entire craft process. As folklorists, we should build on the already existent marketing tradition — if we recognize and appreciate it as an important part of the craft itself. Woven rag rugs, as painted window screens and baskets referred to by Elaine Eff and Egle Žygas are examples of the items where such marketing is an integral part of the whole craft process. In examining western Maryland rug weaving, for example, three points are clear:

- First, woven rugs were always made to be sold. Women do not invest $300 or even $35 in a loom simply to weave rugs for their own homes. Thus, marketing techniques were always a part of the weaving process. Yet too often folklorists have ignored the bartering system which is so important to the craftsperson.
- Second, customers frequently exert considerable influence over the rug that finally rolls off the loom, choosing, for example, color and size of the item (often themselves preparing the raw materials). Consequently this craft, along with many others, has never existed in a so-called "pure" state, free from outside influences.
- Finally, in western Maryland, tourists have been a part of the rug weaver's cultural landscape for many years. Tourists and summer visitors arrived in the region (even long before some of the craftspeople did) and bought the items produced by area weavers. Thus the lines between insider and outsider are blurred, as is probably the case in other regions as well.

If folklorists are willing to identify and to expand on an already existing marketing situation, they can exercise more control over the outside forces that might influence the craft. Thus they can mitigate any negative impact on the craftspeople. Two examples, again from my own experiences, give me hope that this is possible.

- I sold western Maryland woven rag rugs at Bloomingdale's at about the same time as the "Oh! Kentucky" promotion was introduced. However, no one told me what the rugs should look like; on the contrary, the sales staff seemed eager to learn more about the product.
- Craft shops and craft cooperatives can be excellent or awful as I found out in the Blue Ridge. It does take skill and subtlety to influence them. But we can do it.[5]

Why should we make such an effort? As Marsha MacDowell and Kurt Dewhurst so ably illustrate and Teske reiterates, if we do not do so, someone else less informed and less well intentioned will. In addition, by avoiding marketing activities we are refusing to allow craftspeople to validate their activities in a way that is most meaningful to them. We can honor them with National Heritage Awards or escort them to festivals; however, these are forms of

recognition most suited to performance-oriented genres, and we are simply superimposing them upon the craftsperson. In the day-to-day scheme of events, selling is the craftsperson's most important form of recognition. One weaver said to me, "Things have to be pretty good to sell." When she sells a rug, she communicates with an ever widening group of people who tell her that they approve of her craft.

When I hear folklorists discussing other areas of folk craft, I am struck by the sense of camaraderie existing among some craftspeople. Weavers do not have that sense of fellowship. They work in isolation. Selling thus becomes a means of participating in the larger community. If we refuse to help them sell, we are refusing to let them participate in the community in a way that is meaningful to them. I am reminded, again, of three experiences.

- When I worked at festivals, craftspeople were interested in the audience who watched them work, but they were even more interested in which items had sold in the sales tent.
- Each time I visited any one of twenty weavers, she would spread out her ten to fifteen rugs for me to examine. It was an important part of the transaction for me to comment on and to admire each rug.
- One Amish woman wrote to me in the middle of January telling me about her supply of rugs. "It surely makes me feel bad if the people don't come for rugs," she wrote. "I just don't know what to do. But I would almost feel like just selling my loom again and go work for someone else. Which would be the best to do."

As Egle Žygas points out, marketing the craft is not only an important source of self-esteem for the craftsperson, but also an important source of income. Weavers who were able to work steadily earned approximately $200 each month. In an area where per capita income is approximately $5,200 per year, that is an important consideration.

It is my contention that folklorists can help create a responsible marketing system that supports both the craftspeople and at the same time fills the seemingly insatiable need of Americans for traditional crafts.

NOTES

1. See, for example, my comments in "Folklorist as Rag Rug Entrepreneur," George Washington University Folklife Association Newsletter 1.2 (1982): 3-4.
2. "More for Warmth than for Looks: Quilts of the Blue Ridge Mountains," North Carolina Folklife Journal 30 (Fall-Winter 1982): 55-84.
3. See, for example, my field notes from the Blue Ridge Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress.

John Michael Vlach:

The discipline of folklore has a long tradition of ignoring social reality. Created out of nineteenth-century preservationist interest in the passing vestiges of pre-industrial life, folklorists have rarely turned their critical gaze on the forces that lead to the demise of traditional culture. The power of the market, of economic principles, to determine the future of an art form have occasionally been acknowledged, yet we have no outstanding instances where folklorists have intervened to alter or cushion the impact of the marketplace. Is it because we feel incompetent in the real world of buying and selling, the world of dollars and cents? Or are we just content to watch callously and dispassionately as artisans struggle to find some inventive solution for their contemporary economic quandaries? Or have we been so idealistic or romantic as to believe that creativity is not contingent on the need to earn a living? Regardless of our answers, or whether or not we recognize the critical nature of marketing issues for folk art, folklorists have done very little about these problems. Thus, this set of papers represents an important stage in the development of a new consciousness for the field of folklore. They contain not only a call to action, but also a number of strategies, both implicit and explicit, that might be put into practice.

In the offices of those federal agencies mandated to serve the folk arts, a comment frequently uttered, only half in jest, when problems arise is: "Send in the folk art police." Police action and folk art may seem an unlikely combination, but serious problems exist for folk artists, particularly those artists who fashion material objects. They are competing with a network of factories, distributors, advertisers, and retailers against which they have few, if any, advantages. What is called for in such a circumstance is intervention. The papers in this volume suggest that the "folk art cops" adopt both a friendly and a stern demeanor — a good cop/mean cop routine — that can be adapted to the various problems confronting folk artists. Those who would sell or consume crafted items need to be persuaded that such objects are more than mere commodities. They need to know that with a quilt or a basket comes an artist's history, identity, and human worth. To attempt to instill this kind of appreciation is, in fact, an extension of the educational skills which are most folklorists' forté, except that the venue shifts from the classroom to the corporate board room or the shopping mall, and technique shifts from the lecture to using public media. Developing a greater appreciation of alternative culture, of traditional life, in the consuming public is a goal much to be wished for but it is also a very time consuming project. By the time the buying millions are wised up to the ethical considerations that are attached to folk objects, many folk artists will have either given up or will have had

their art form drastically and insensitively altered. A sterner set of actions with a more immediate impact would then involve direct complaint and even threat. Offensive, demeaning advertising copy, for example, could be critiqued with a letter campaign to the editor of the Magazine or newspaper that ran the particular advertisement. Department stores that engage in sales campaigns that trade on stereotyped images can be challenged. Where a group of artisans is used as a source of cheap labor, as is often the case with rural quilting bees, a folklorist might step in to find an alternative market outlet in which their designs would be appreciated as much as their work. What previously held folklorists back from such action was their sense that their professional identities depended on maintaining a detached academic distance. Now, however, the public sector is where most new folklore employment is found and where the confrontation of social reality is demanded. It would seem that the "folk art police" is destined to need more recruits who are willing to help even the odds for folk artists in the marketplace.

One of the conditions of the contemporary western world that humanists are prone to ignore is that ours is a materialist society, that we are what we own. Buying and selling is the way, like it or not, that we become and reaffirm who we are or who we want to be. Given the humanist tradition in folklore study, folklorists tend to emphasize the psychological and emotional aspects of the design and production of objects caring most about artisans' creativity and their personal satisfaction. Thus we tend to overlook their satisfaction in getting a good price for those same objects. While there may have been a time when applying monetary standards of worth to traditional items would have been unseemly, an affront to the local standards of decorum, nowadays, profit is more positively perceived. The golden era of pre-industrial society when goods changed hands more on the basis of mutual respect than on the availability of cash, if it ever existed, has now passed. We must be mindful then that the contemporary makers of pre-industrial items whose life styles we cherish exist in the modern world and that they have to a great extent, learned to accept its values. Our advocacy should not then be motivated by a wish to turn back the clock but a desire to foster a system of evaluation where an authentic hand-made item also earns a high price. Top dollar is what earns respect in our society and there is no reason why excellent folk artists shouldn't have both. That they have been held back is clear enough, but they should not be hindered further by our unconscious antiquarian longings. Folklorists need, therefore, to enter into the economic arena as advocates for folk artists properly equipped with marketplace savvy and instincts as well as with a special sensitivity to the nature of small group interactions.

NEW YORK FOLKLORE
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Mitigating Marketing: A Window of Opportunity for Applied Folklorists

A. H. WALLE

Introduction

The professional character of folklore is rapidly changing; today practitioner, not just academic, folklorists are exerting an increasingly powerful influence. As folklorists enter the public and private sectors, however, many of us feel uneasy; fears that our profession might unwittingly be misused are openly discussed. As buyers and collectors invade a region, folklorists often feel helpless to stem social disruption.

On the one hand, marketing increasingly impacts upon the activities of not-for-profit institutions because marketers are consciously attempting to generalize their tools to serve the needs of non-business organizations. On the other hand, the folk arts are currently fashionable. As a result business people are actively seeking to gain sources of folk wares to cater to their clients. Various folk groups, such as the Hmong, for example, are consciously adjusting their output to please current target markets: Americans.

Folklorists are correct in believing that marketing activities have a profound impact upon traditional people. This paper suggests the impact may be much more significant than often assumed by those who view marketing primarily as the mere function of buying and selling. Today such conceptions are obsolete; in the last 25 years marketing has evolved into a broad, strategic profession and marketers control the operation of many organizations, wielding profound decision-making responsibilities. Here I will sketch out a relevant overview of modern marketing theory and practice so that folklorists can better understand this vital profession and how it can impact (both positively and negatively) upon traditional people, the creative process, and the items produced. And I will make some concrete and constructive suggestions on how folklorists can best deal with marketers, the marketing process, and their new vis-a-vis public policy — as, in fact, "policy scientists."

Marketing as a General Strategic Science

When folklorists speak of marketing, we often forget that today this profession is much more complex and influential than it once was.

During the past twenty five years, marketing has groomed itself as a universal strategic science. Based upon this supposed universality, marketers have generalized their techniques to serve organizations other than merely those which are dedicated to the profit motive. Today, for example, museums and other not-for-profit organizations are applying marketing skills and using techniques developed by marketers in their strategic planning (Walle 1985).

Phillip Kotler, an acclaimed marketer, strongly advocates that not-for-profit organizations establish marketing programs. In his definitive book on the subject, Kotler states:

> It should be clear that nonprofit organizationa are involved in marketing whether or not they are conscious of it . . . [Their] operating principles define their marketing. The issue is not one of whether or not nonprofit organizations should be involved in marketing, but rather how thoughtful they should be at it (1975:9).

Kotler's observations are valid enough, at least superficially. All organizations are created to serve some purpose of public. If their staffs clearly understand what they are attempting to accomplish, such institutions can expect to enhance their effectiveness. Many of the functions of public sector folklorists, furthermore, can be better accomplished if certain marketing orientations are carefully articulated and considered. If a specific program or activity is embraced, if a means of raising grant money is adopted, or if a scheme to enlist volunteers is embodied, certain marketing techniques are useful in achieving these ends. Nonetheless, folklore and traditional people may be impacted upon in negative ways by carelessly applied techniques. To avoid negative consequences, we must explore the essence of modern marketing.

To understand the basic issues inherent in marketing folklore, a retrospective analysis of marketing's development is useful. During the early 20th century, business scholars and practitioners viewed marketers as specialists who should perform ad hoc tasks in order to help management implement their strategic plans.[1] During this era, an emphasis upon the costs and benefits of various managerially derived options make marketing a relatively low-profile sub-discipline.

As time went on, however, marketing began to demand more and more decision-making authority. Slowly and relentlessly much of the decision making power of "management" *per se* was usurped by marketers. In general, marketers insisted that "the customer is always right" and that they were best able to assess customer's demands because of the direct and intimate contact between marketers and consumers. Slowly the status of marketing was raised from a sub-servient to a dominant role. Today, the balance of power in many firms has swung toward marketers. This is especially true in firms which sell

consumer goods such as folk arts.

The definitive assertion that marketing is more than a rote, non-strategic craft is R. J. Keith's "The Marketing Revolution" (1960) which portrayed the evolution of business as stemming from an earlier era of naivety when unenlightened organizations were controlled by production oriented managerial types. Eventually, this origin myth continues, business organizations matured and came to full flower as marketers gained control. The underlying premise of such evolutionary models was something called "the marketing concept" which marketers insisted should always be the true "north star" indicating the strategic path business should follow. Thus, the argument concluded, organizations should be controlled by marketers.

Actually, the marketing concept is just an enthusiastic truism which during marketing's rise to dominance emerged as the rallying cry and the *raison d'être* for the profession. It insisted that organizations are often run not for the benefits of those who are officially served, but primarily to serve the needs of employees and others who supposedly are there solely to provide benefits to customers. Folklorists are well aware of this syndrome. A few years ago, for example, Bruce Jackson[3] explained that the *actual* long term interns in a prison are the guards, not the convicts. The prisoners who are clients (in some form or fashion) usually sit out relatively short sentences. Career correctional officers, in contrast, spend year after year with their lives intimately intertwined with the institution. Given that fact (plus, of course, the power of the guards) the prison structure often reflects the needs of workers, not clients.

The prison example demonstrates, in bold exaggeration, the essential point made to justify the marketing concept. All too often organizations fail to serve their clients, and revolve instead around the wants and needs of the organization members. "Managerial" types often forget the true purpose of their organization and let the "tail wag the dog."

The distillation of the marketing concept insists that the expressed wants and needs of clients cannot be ignored. In the case of prisons, where clients literally constitute a "captive audience," a non-marketing orientation might survive. Most institutions, however, are not so lucky; if people do not like the products and services offered, they usually can easily defect to a rival organization.

When employed merely as a check against the unchallenged priorities of organization members, the marketing concept is useful because it addresses the needs and wants of clients. If emblazoned as the "be all and end all" of strategic planning, however, it can degenerate into a mindless cliché. The latter has occurred; today, the marketing concept has become firmly entrenched as the keystone of

business thought and as an inescapable conventional wisdom of the field.

As the years have passed, a number of prominent marketers expanded the relevance of marketing and the marketing concept beyond the realm of "free enterprise," asserting that marketing is a universal activity. The definitive statement is Phillip Kotler and Sidney Levy's "Broadening The Concept of Marketing" (1969). The whole thrust of this seminal manifesto is that all organizations (whatever their purpose, structure, or motive) must serve some specific public. To do so, all organizations must identify the needs, wants, and priorities of their respective clients. To whatever degree this is done, marketing exists. Since "marketing" seems to be universal, a near consensus of professional marketers insisted that the techniques of marketing (although originally developed to serve profit making businesses) could be adjusted to serve all institutions.

Within certain bounds this is reasonable enough. All organizations serve clients, and knowing what clients want is useful. Marketers, however, parlayed such truisms into what they wrongly felt was a general science of human behavior. Soon all activity from the most rational business decision to the most emotional moment of one's life were being equated as some aspect of marketing. Noted marketer Ben Enis, for example, insists:

> Here, in my opinion, are examples of personal selling [a subset of marketing] . . . "I think this valve will meet your specifications." "Can the President sell his program to the American people?" "The minister preached salvation" . . . "Darling, will you marry me?" (Enis 1979:2).

Folklorists, of course, are likely to be baffled by the thought of equating phenomena such as White House PR or industrial sales with a profound religious experience or with the emotion packed proposal of a lifetime commitment. Admittedly, churches often overtly use marketing techniques and lovers often posture themselves *à la* Erving Goffman (1959) to impress their mates. Focusing upon such superficial similarities, however, can blind us to the profound differences between propaganda vs. love or salesmanship vs. faith.

A better thought out and (because of that very fact) more dangerous extension of marketing comes from marketing theorist Richard Bagozzi who argues, "marketing is a general function of universal applicability. It is the discipline of exchange behavior, and it deals with problems related to this behavior" (1975). Using such logic, Bagozzi attempts the ultimate conquest: all human behavior related to exchange is dealt with as marketing (or at least "marketesque") behavior. Does this include the rapport between folk performers and their audiences? Apparently so. Is it useful to define marketing's universe of discouse this broadly? I doubt it.

Bagozzi, in his intellectual forays into the provinces of other disciplines, does not advance knowledge via cross disciplinary analysis. He does just the opposite: he reduces knowledge to clichés via hyperbolic equating. Recently I rejected Bagozzi's blanket broadening of the concept as dangerously reductionist, noting that "defining marketing very generally or around a concept such as exchange emphasizes the end result . . . interpreted in a cultural void" (Walle 1983:32). Folklorists, of course, remember that exchange has taken place for many thousands of years and realize that not all behavior can be routinely equated with or considered to be marketing. We are only too aware of examples where, for instance, record companies and folk musicians had different ideas of the exchanges which were taking place. Such confusion has lead to misunderstandings, tragedy, bitterness, and distrustful informants. General theories of marketing applied too cavalierly easily equate all exchange and inhibit attempts to meaningfully deal with such profound subtleties. When dealing with different types of people in contact, understanding such subtleties is crucial.

In summary, since World War II, marketing has risen from relative obscurity to the role of decision maker by offering general theories of human behavior which allegedly could be applied universally. Coinciding with marketing's new status is the trend for folklorists to begin to think in marketing terms. As folklore has ceased merely to be academic, we have become involved in strategic and policy decisions. In addition, marketing folk or folklife objects is big business. Such developments insure that folklore and marketing will be intimately connected and related even if they emerge as rather strange bedfellows at times.

Marketing's Four Strategic Tools

As has been suggested above, marketing has come to define itself as a major strategic science which can be applied to all organizations. Marketers feel that they are best able to assess the needs of an existing or potential group of clients (target markets) and then determine how to satisfy their desires. Thus, marketers assert, they should be the organization's dominant decision makers and leaders.

Marketing, as we have noted, did not always have such clout. Writing in an earlier era, Henry Glassie viewed marketing as relatively simple and non-influential, implying that it did not profoundly impact upon traditional people.

> Assistance to genuine traditional crafts should be limited to marketing, for more can be culturally and psychologically disruptive (1967:53-4).

The implication which emerges from Glassie's now dated orientation

is that marketing has a relatively minor impact upon the traditional peoples and their arts. In certain circumstances, this could be true; the folklorist might simply line up buyers; expedite sales, or help to assure fair prices. Marketing, narrowly envisioned in this way, would probably cause minimal disruption.

Where professional marketers are involved, however, the techniques of satisfying target markets becomes considerably more sophisticated and far-reaching. In general, marketers look for "controllable variables" which they strategically manipulate to please a target market. Since 1960, when E. Jerome McCarthy published the first edition of his definitive *Basic Marketing: A Managerial Approach*, marketing thought has concentrated primarily upon four sets of controllable variables and how to manipulate them and, thus, enhance the organization's performance. McCarthy labeled these variables as:

1) *Product:* What goods or services are actually being offered and how they can be adjusted to satisfy clients.
2) *Price:* The money (or whatever) which must be exchanged for the product.
3) *Promotion:* Any advertising, communication, public relations, etc. which will enhance marketability.
4) *Place:* How the customer gets the goods. Distribution, location, etc.

McCarthy dubbed his controllable variables marketing's "the 4 Ps"; he was so successful that the "4 P Aproach" or some overtly derived version of it is still the underlying principle of almost all marketing text to this day.

The 4 P's form a "laundry list" of strategic options; marketers are taught to consciously coordinate them. As can be seen, the 4 P's constitute a vast arsenal of control and manipulation which goes beyond merely lining up buyers. Marketing, according to Glassie's 1967 perspective, is little more than finding customers who buy the goods after they are made by traditional people and does not impact in other ways. As professional marketers become more intimately involved in projects, however, traditional people are increasingly asked to cater to market tastes and demands. Encouraging performers and craftspeople to do so, of course, can be extremely disruptive. Marketers, furthermore, tend, by training, to think in a relatively short-term time frame which derives from the fact that marketing originally served private businesses which were primarily concerned with the profits currently being earned. When marketers recommend strategic choices or options (evaluated in terms of dollars or some other yardstick, such as museum attendance), they are often more concerned with the profitability of their organization than the survival of specific divisions, product lines, or subsidiaries. Indeed, a

significant part of marketing is often to decide how and when to let a product die. There is, in fact, a whole literature on how to do so. "Harvesting" is the euphemism used to label such activities. Basically, if the profitability of a product declines below an acceptable level (however measured) support is withdrawn, leading to slow death. This, ironically, is often very profitable since all revenues are siphoned off and little if any further investment is made in the product being harvested. These profits are then funneled into more profitable ventures.

Folklorists, naturally, would be horrified and enraged by the thought of "harvesting" folk traditions in such a manner and, no doubt, most marketers would agree, recognizing a difference between traditional people and an obsolete brand of toothpaste. I expect few reputable marketers working in bona fide folklife projects would recommend anything approaching a harvesting strategy; such orientation, however, may unconsciously affect their opinions. Even more insidious are well-meaning recommendations to profoundly manipulate a traditional art in ways which are counterproductive to traditional people. Should, for example, folk arts be executed in pastel colors? Here the folklorist must be careful to weigh the pros and cons since manipulating controllable variables may be socially disruptive even if they build demand. We, as folklorists, already know and have discussed such dilemmas. What we forget is that marketing is a powerful profession which looks to the needs of the buyer, not the producer, which here are the folk. We must profit from marketing without forgetting or ignoring other responsibilities.

Consider the controllable variables of "place" which concerns where traditional goods will be sold and where traditional artists can be viewed by the public. Often the issue is not *if* traditional people and their goods will be placed before a larger public; instead the issue is how this will occur and how can it be accomplished in a way which is as positive as possible.

At a recent folk festival, for example, I was assigned to work with two traditional weavers. After the festival was concluded, one of the craftsmen told me that he was very happy and that he had sold nearly all of his merchandise. Then, he admitted that he was quite puzzled; he said he had previously been featured at quite a few craft shows, but this (his first) folk festival was different. At craft shows, he recalled, a large percentage of his sales were commissions to create weavings exactly as specified by the customer, while at the festival, he sold all his readymade wares but received almost no commissions for custom work. Nobody had come with wallpaper samples to have matched and some customers even spoke of decorating a room around the weavings, not vice versa. The weaver was curious and wanted to know why these differences had occurred.

The reason demonstrates how a certain proper location can enhance traditional crafts while another location can undermine them. People who go to folk festivals tend to have a respect for traditions and typically don't want to buy something uniquely made to buyer specifications, preferring to acquire a true example of folk art which reflects the maker's aesthetics. (To a certain extent, furthermore, a proper "place" can be created at folk festivals by educating people to the significance of folk traditions and specific crafts, etc.)

Those who go to craft shows, in contrast, are often decorators or other people who are concerned with creating a pre-conceived interior design and have little reverence for folk traditions *per se*. The traditional craftsperson is viewed merely as a technician.

The implication of these differences is that folk festivals tend to be less disruptive to traditional people since there is a greater chance that clients will have a respect for and an understanding of the products they buy. When traditional people are to be featured at events where they might not be understood or appreciated, possible humiliation can be mitigated if folklorists anticipate how people will respond and advise traditional people accordingly — or if they can carefully orchestrate the event.

As hinted above, altering a traditional art to mesh with contemporary tastes is a possibly disruptive act; nonetheless, there are some instances when such accommodation will have minimum negative impact. A few years ago, I visited a Persian rug dealer and I asked if the rugs made today were designed to cater to modern Western tastes. He gave me a brief history which indicated that Persian rug colors and designs had been altered over the years to accommodate Western preferences. Then I asked if he felt that the Persian rug tradition had been undermined by outside influences. He responded that Persian rugs had long been made by people who intended to sell them to outsiders; as a result, for hundreds of years, Persian rugs were often designed to satisfy the tastes of the buyer, not to reflect the aesthetics or traditions of the folk who made them. Producing products or choosing color schemes which accommodate Western tastes, he concluded was just another example of what had gone on for centuries, not the debasement of a hitherto pristine folk tradition.

Not being a Persian rug specialist, I do not know the accuracy of the rug dealer's opinions, but the example does demonstrate that some traditional craftspeople might routinely respond to outside tastes. Such folk traditions, therefore, might have a long history of serving outside people and, therefore, might have always reflected the tastes of the customer. Under such circumstances, dictating designs would not be profoundly disruptive, constituting merely the latest chapter in an ongoing series of relationships with outside people. In addition,

such people might feel comfortable making products on demand. Other folk traditions, in contrast, are profoundly nested within the cultural milieu of a people; under these circumstances, forcing traditional people to accommodate outside tastes can cause profound damage to the folk culture and to the self-esteem of the people.

Where folklorists aid folk by suggesting products which the larger public will buy, careful consideration must be given to the total impact which such coercion will or will not have upon the people, their culture, and their traditions. The degree of impact should then be placed within a larger context: what will probably occur if the "product" is not adjusted to mesh with public tastes? Where a tradition will totally die unless it is made commercially viable, for example, alternatives must be carefully weighed. We all know this. The question is where do our interests coincide and where do they diverge from marketers.

The third controllable variable which marketers seek to manipulate is the price of the product; the goal of pricing is to maximize the effectiveness of the organization, but where the emotions of traditional people are involved, setting prices or monetary rewards can be complex. For example, in a recent conversation Bess Lomax Hawes discussed how difficult it was to determine the proper amount of money to award traditional craftspeople and performers to acknowledge their work. Hawes recalls that choosing a dollar figure to be awarded as part of the National Heritage Fellowships was walking a tightrope between an amount which was so small it trivialized human accomplishments *vs.* an amount that is so large it might create resentment, jealousy or encourage unrealistic expectations among traditional people. Although not phrased in marketing terms, Hawes' concerns reflect the knowledge that dollar values can effect people in a variety of ways, some positive and some negative.

Marketers usually look at price merely as a tool to generate maximum profits; they will adjust prices up or down in order to satisfy the target market, paying little attention to the impact which price will have upon those who produce the goods. As we have seen, however, pricing strategies can profoundly impact upon traditional people; folklorists must remain aware of this and where necessary help marketing consultants appreciate the ramifications of a specific pricing strategy.

The last controllable variable is promotion. At one level, this is a variable, that the people who are typically chosen to work at folk festivals, etc. are those who can tolerate the heat of publicity without wilting. Such people, however, are often not the best examples of traditions; they are the extroverted, they have kissed the Blarney Stone, they can easily converse with a wide variety of people.

In situations where marketers might want to generate PR, however,

people who are not comfortable with publicity may be hurt by it. In this case, folklorists must be able to explicitly demonstrate to marketers that promotion and public relations might not be appropriate for all groups and, therefore, might not universally be a legitimate controllable or manipulative variable even if some other client (the public) must do without.

Each of marketing's 4 P's, therefore, is potentially disruptive; even more damaging, however, is the fact that marketers typically orchestrate all four controllable variables to create a total "marketing mix" which, in synergistic fashion, has much more impact than if every "P" was manipulated independently. Unless persuaded otherwise, marketers will routinely adjust all controllable variables (Place, Product, Price, and Promotion) to satisfy a preconceived target market. Creating such an integrated marketing mix might help sell the product, but it can also profoundly undercut folk culture in complex and interrelated ways.

Perhaps the main danger of modern marketing is that the marketing concept consciously directs attention toward the customer. Since the "folk" are seemingly "production people," it is easy — too easy — to forget their needs and wants and, instead, to focus attention toward clients (those who will buy the goods if the proper "marketing mix" is adopted).

Marketing practitioners are most comfortable when they can latch onto some group which is closely analogous to what private sector businesses call "customers." Marketers may realize that there exist subtle relationships between "folk," their heritage, and with the larger culture, but such measures are fairly foreign to their methods and difficult to deal with using their usual means of analysis. Such phenomena fit rather poorly into a cost-benefit analysis or a profit ratio. A head count of attendees at a folk festival or the price paid for red & white vs. blue & green quilts, in contrast, is the type of measure which can make marketers shout "Eureka!"

It is this syndrome of longing for surrogate customs which lead Philip Kotler, the guru of a broadened marketing approach, to observe that some "organizations are unresponsive simply because they concentrate on other things than customer satisfaction. Thus, many museums are more interested in collecting antiquarian material than in making this material relevant or interesting to museum goers" (1982:33). The oversimplicity in Kotler's logic, of course, is that he considers something that overtly looks and acts like "customers" to constitute *a priori* the proper and most relevant client group to be served.

Certainly folklorists can easily appreciate that there are benefits to marketing principles and procedures. When used as the primary decision making tool, however, problems can develop; in the quest for

quasi-customers and in the desire to cater to them, other relevant clients such as traditional people can be unjustly and tragically de-emphasized.

Folklorists, of course, are deeply concerned with preserving traditions, insuring that traditions evolve in coherent and meaningful ways, and fostering self-determination among people. Folklorists are also concerned about the psychic wellbeing of the carriers of such traditions. To marketers, however, such phenomena, people, and their products, may seem to be mere merchandise and production personnel. Unless educated to the contrary, marketers will deal with not-for-profit folklore projects as just another application of their profession.

Folklorists must be able not only to understand how marketers think, but also how the perspectives of folklore typically differ from the mindset of marketers. If folklorists can do those things, they will better be able to respond to market activities both when they occur in the private sector and when governmentally funded programs employ marketing consultants. One way to portray these differences is in the following table which compares the typical orientations of folklore and marketing.

THE ORIENTATIONS OF FOLKLORISTS AND MARKETERS COMPARED

	Marketers	**Folklorists**
Primary Client Group Served	Mass cultural groups which primarily resemble "customers"	Folk, traditional and other local groups who often resemble "producers"
Underlying Orientation	**Marketing Concept:** Goal of organization is to adjust to fit the needs of the "customer like" and to serve them better	**Cultural Holism:** Folk and traditions exist in a socio/cultural/economic milieu. Changing one part changes others
Typical Activities	1. Find ideal target market 2. Manipulate controllable variables to serve target market	1. Analyze folk, find its vulnerability, cultural identity, lore, etc. 2. Advocate how group's well-being can be best preserved and enhanced

Major Contributions	Insure that programs will exert as large an impact on the *total* culture as is possible	Mediate the disruption caused by outside intervention and/or insure that traditional people are not disenfranchised.

Folklore as a Policy Science

Although the chart presented above portrays the divergent orientations of folklorists and marketers, a major question remains. What should folklorists do with such information? Indeed, our profession is currently caught up in polemics regarding this very question. We all realize that increased cultural contact (much of it involving marketing) takes its toll from traditional people, their emotional and physical well-being, and the traditions they harbor. There is considerable debate, however, regarding what we should do about this situation and if our efforts will really make any meaningful contribution to the people we try to assist. Veneered onto these doubts are fears that we may, at times, be denying self-determinism to the very people we champion by encouraging folk groups to cherish and maintain lifeways which are increasingly *passé* and dysfunctional. Such fears and doubts impact both upon public sector folklorists (who realize that their intervention may negatively impact upon their clients) and the folklore scholar (who may believe that "manipulating cultural exchange can play havoc with scholarly values of detachment and objectivity;" Null 1985:3).

The issues need to be discussed and, hopefully, laid to rest. If a complete resolution is impossible at this time, we, as a profession, must articulate the issues clearly so that the remaining differences can be discussed meaningfully. These goals can, perhaps, best be accomplished by studying a similar soul-searching which took place among anthropologists in the 1970s. Perhaps a brief overview of anthropology's grappling with nearly identical issues can help us come to grips with a parallel series of problems and polemical issues which we, in folklore, are now facing.

In a classic statement regarding anthropology's role in mitigating the plight of traditional people, David Maybury-Lewis (1977) suggests that many important decision-makers assume that traditional people must inevitably face a harsh, unrelenting confrontation with the modern world. Such descision-makers use phrases like "the social costs of development" or "the price of progress" not to justify the disruption which traditional people often endure, but in order to portray these tragic experiences as an unalterable fate (Maybury-Lewis 1977:5o).

Anthropologists have long served as advocates of traditional people; as a result some critics assert that anthropologists are misguided or

selfish in their own special ways. The rhetoric of such detractors can easily be exploded. "First," Maybury-Lewis says, "it is contended that anthropologists want tribal people left alone simply to preserve a traditional way of life . . . [Anthropologists] are sentimentalists . . . This [opinion] is a serious misrepresentation . . . [anthropologists are actually] concerned with how to soften the impact of inevitable contact so it will not destroy them in the name of progress . . . A second argument [against anthropologists] is a malicious variation on the first one . . . it is claimed that anthropologists would like to keep tribal peoples isolated in what amounts to human zoos for . . . [anthropological] research purposes. Again this is a misrepresentation. Anthropologists . . . argue that these peoples' contacts with the outside world should be regulated if they are not to prove destructive . . . (1977:59).

Coupled with Maybury-Lewis' rebuttals is G. N. Appell's concept of "the social separation syndrome" which involves "role conflict and ambiguity, threat to one's self-esteem and an impaired social identity" (1977:14). Appell continues:

> Social bereavement arising from social change seems to follow a developmental sequence similar to personal bereavement. In this there is first a period of denial as numbness accompanied by anxiety, fear, and feelings of threat to one's identity. This is succeeded by a phase of frustrated searching for the lost world or individual, hoping for a reversal and then bitter pining and unrelieved sense of pain. Following this there is a period of depression and apathy . . . Finally there is the phase of reorganization when the bereaved begins to build new plans and assumptions about the world . . . (1977:14)

Significantly, if this process is not adequately worked out, "certain pathological manifestations can occur which may include unreleased depression and apathy, health impairments of various kinds, and/or unexpected outbursts of aggression" (1977:15).

According to Appell, however, cultures have strengths which can be used to overcome the anomie of the social separation syndrome. Much of the strength emanates from cultural traditions which survive from a people's past. Because these things are so crucial to people, "a society undergoing change . . . has a right to access to its cultural traditions, its language and its social history . . ." (Appell 1977:14). Thus, the emotional well-being and even the physical survival of groups being subjected to disruptive contact with the mass culture may depend on the strength and viability of its traditions. These people have a basic human right that these traditions should remain intact to help them cope.

What emerges from these observations from anthropology is the

fact that there are rational and justifiable reasons for policy makers to exert control over the way in which people are introduced to culture change and to the outside world. According to Maybury-Lewis, "There is no natural or historic law that militates against small societies. There are only political choices" (1977:56). Perhaps by refocusing our professional priorities and goals in a way which incorporate the lesson of anthropology, we can see that advocacy, and intervention on behalf of traditional people, are not merely vain attempts to hold back the tide of cultural evoluation, but, instead, are means of managing change so traditional people can cope and adapt. Indeed, such sentiments are at the heart of the federally sponsored cultural conservation movement. In this spirit, Ormond Loomis writes "Proposing governmental efforts to stem the inevitable change in society would be pointless. Further, in a free society, even expecting government to slow the progress would be wrong . . . It is possible, however, to temper change so that it proceeds in accordance with the will of the people, and not in response to the pressures of faddish trends or insensitive public or private projects" (1983:29).

In a word, there is a profound need and increasingly a legal mandate for professional policy scientists to work on behalf of traditional people. A key part of this work will be to implement methods of preserving people's folk traditions in ways which do not deny self-determinism to these groups. Many folklorists, seeing words like "folklife" being bandied about on Capitol Hill, assume that folklore will, by its very nature, be the profession chosen to carry out this work. In actuality, nothing could be further from the truth. Loomis, for example, uses the general term "cultural resource specialist" to identify the people who might perform such work (1983:10). Indeed not only can several disciplines make a legitimate claim for such assignments, some of them possess an enviable track record of similar assignments and have long assisted decision makers in formulating strategies, goals, and solutions. Applied anthropology, in particular, is well equipped to perform tasks which folklorists might assume are their unique domain.

Folklorists, furthermore, should not naively assume that other disciplines will not actively compete for such work. Revealingly, Bonita Howell has pointed out that anthropologists can legitimately vie for dominant roles in folklife and cultural conservation studies. She observes that the cultural conservation report (Loomis 1983) "defines 'intangible cultural resources' largely from the perspective of folklife studies, but views 'community life and values' as the entity to protect. (This definition of folklife is sufficiently broad to encompass concerns addressed by anthropologists . . .)" (Howell 1985). Howell goes on to suggest that perhaps applied anthropologists, not folklorists, should mastermind such folklife projects. She states, "the

cultural conservation concept" attempts to develop a comprehensive coordinated approach to heritage conservation which has been addressed only piecemeal through existing efforts . . . (Note the central role anthropology can play in coordinating these efforts)" (Howell 1985).

Bonita Howell, incidently, has performed impressively in adapting the techniques of applied anthropology to folklife projects, most notably in *A Survey of Folklife along the Big South Fork of the Cumberland River* (1981). She has shown that professionals other than folklorists can "plow the same field we do" and, in the process, demonstrate responsibility and professionalism worthy of praise.

This situation raises profound questions regarding the very nature of folklore and its ability to compete for such assignments. First, do we as folklorists (individually or collectively) choose to turn such assignments over to other disciplines? In the final analysis, other qualified parties would welcome such opportunities. Secondly (and related), does the profession of folklore possess any unique perspectives, skills, or orientations which cannot be duplicated by others; do we have a significant role to play which cannot be performed by others? These questions should be asked against the backdrop of the contemporary situation: cultural contact will occur and, increasingly, governmental mandates make mitigation by cultural resource specialists inevitable. Do folklorists wish to be counted among these cultural resource specialists?

Where folklorists choose (either individually or collectively) to adopt this role, they must come to grips with the reality that they are functioning as policy scientists. To do so, they must adapt (at least from 8 to 5) to the needs of governmental or corporate decision makers. Policy scientists, on the other hand, must be willing to speak out in appropriate ways even if their sentiments rub bureaucrats the wrong way. In either case, however, such input must be phrased in ways which can be used by decision makers.

In the past, folklorists have often been cloistered theorists and, thus, have not always developed the skills needed to weather the storms of partisan debate or mastered the techniques of dealing with people who want answers to "nuts and bolts" questions. Certainly the experience of public sector work has provided a baptism under fire which has allowed some folklorists to gain savvy in policy making/advising situations. There seems, however, to be relatively few institutionalized means for folklorists to acquire such skills. This plight was underscored at the 1985 Folklore and the Public Sector Conference (held at Western Kentucky University) where many applied folklorists cried out for aid and advice in such areas.

As a result, Richard March of the Wisconsin Arts Board has begun

organizing a network of applied/public sector folklorists to provide an informal method of overcoming such limitations. Such stopgap measures are useful, but if folklore chooses to compete as a policy science, will informal efforts prove sufficient? Or will they be too little and too late?

To whatever extent folklorists assume the role of policy scientists, they must be able to adjust to that milieu. They must also be able to realize that helping people cope with the often tragic consequences of cultural intervention is legitimate and does not invariably lead to research which is tainted, biased, or slanted. To the degree to which we can do these things, folklore (or at least an applied/public sector branch of it) will have a legitimate reason to claim cultural conservation activities as part of its domain. To whatever extent we choose not to function in this capacity, others will fill the slack.

Mitigating Marketing

In the proceeding section, I suggested that the current interest in folklife will not inevitably result in folklore being chosen as the profession which will perform research, consulting and mitigating in this area. Other disciplines have legitimate claims on the same turf. Additionally, I suggested that folklore must posture itself as a policy science in order to compete for such assignments.

Folklorists, however, need to do more than merely parade themselves as fellow policy scientists. More importantly, we need to point to relevant areas of expertise where our discipline's knowledge and skills are "irreplaceable." Folklore has a long history of dealing with marketing and marketers; this provides a rich heritage of skills which cannot be duplicated elsewhere.

Three basic ways of helping traditional people deal with marketing emerge as significant and feasible. They include:

- Working with various public programs designed to showcase, enhance, and preserve traditional people and their skills.
- Working in various projects designed to access folk heritages and to mitigate the changes wrought by development, change, and new marketing activities.
- Working in private marketing situations to insure that decisions are equitable and in the interest of all involved.

All three roles (and folklore's unique skills which relate to them) will be briefly described below.

Over the years, various folklife-related programs have been publicly funded. This has created a growing area of practitioner activity in our profession. With numerous state, federal, and even municipal folklife programs coming on line, our collective expertise in such areas is growing. Another invaluable set of skills stem from the folk festival

phenomena and the fact that folklorists are aware of how publicity and marketing can impact upon people. We know that to subject people to a dual life of "celebrity on tour" vs. "nobody" back home can have dire emotional ramifications which often duplicate the symptoms of the social separation syndrome. So too, local jealousies and unprepared/unresponsive audiences can, if unmitigated, extract a severe toll. Other professionals can empathize; folklorists have witnessed firsthand the tragic results of such interactions.

Our profession possesses a legacy which is invaluable, but which often emerges only at "gripe sessions" when we "cry in our beer" about the horrors we have seen at this or that folk festival. Folklorists need to tap these experiences.

To best accomplish these goals, public sector folklorists should develop a knowledge of marketing principles and methods. Of current textbooks, William Zikmund and Michael d'Amico's *Marketing* (1984) is recommended because it supplements a standard "4 Ps approach" (discussed above) with other relevant orientations. Special attention, of course, should be paid to not-for-profit marketing and Phillip Kotler's two texts on the subject (1975, 1982). The goals of such study must be to:

- establish when and where legitimately to use marketing strategies.
- establish where marketing (used as the major strategic tool) can defeat the goals of folklife and cultural conservation programs.
- learn the basic terminology of marketing, etc. so that folklorists can better interact with marketers as equal partners.

Although public sector work should emerge as a vital role for our profession, there is an unfortunate trend to limit applied folklore to such areas. In discussions at the 1985 Folklore and The Public Sector Conference, for example, Archie Green suggested that practitioners should view themselves as "public sector" not "applied" folklorists. Although Green's discussions were insightful, the results of such a professional posture would be to circumscribe the horizons of the field. We must ask if practitioner folklorists will best fullfill their mission by exclusively dealing within the not-for-profit realm. Also, would so limiting the profession shirk other responsibilities and legitimate opportunities?

A second area where I believe folklorists can and should compete for practitioner assignments is in social impact assessment projects which seek to determine the true results of development projects underwritten by federal or state funds. Increasingly, such impact assessment employs qualitative measures instead of merely using

statistics. Folklorists are ideally suited for a wide range of qualitative impact studies involving traditional people.

Such opportunities for folklore have been somewhat ignored in the past so that other goals could be discussed. Thus, the cultural conservation report (Loomis 1983:83) states, "The Consultants emphasized that the report should not dwell on reactive federal involvement in the preservation process, that is, on actions triggered by the impact of major development projects; that it should address, instead the possibilities for action which take more independent initiative . . . [such as] the American Folklife Center." Dealing with this universe of discourse in a report designed to showcase what an ideal folklife project can accomplish is understandable, but should not blind us to other significant areas of service and opportunity.

Performing social impact assessment of development projects upon folklife is an area of applied work which is now being carried out. Bonita Howell's (1981) study of the Big South Fork (a geographic region developed as a recreational area) is a classic example of this kind of work. It is recommended reading for all who consider applying for such employment opportunities.

Perhaps the most controversial potential use of practitioner folklore is direct involvement in marketing folk products (and performances) by the private sector. In various exchanges in the *AFS Newsletter*, profound fears have been expressed regarding collaboration with private enterprise. My response to such fears is simple: economic contact between business and traditional people will occur; it is a rather misplaced sense of professional ethics to abandon traditional people when they are being impacted upon by such powerful social/economic forces.

Many folklorists shun such opportunities in the belief that any collaboration with private business is destined to be a debasing experience for our folk clients. Ironically, unless folklorists function to interface between business and traditional people, the plans of unenlightened retailers and other merchandisers will run rampant —untempered in any significant way. Folklorists can and should help business decision makers and traditional people understand each other.

A significant fact to remember is that different types of retail establishments have different merchandising needs and, significantly, these needs are often translated into different production and merchandising strategies. Folklorists who understand marketing theory and retailing practices can help foster relationships between folk artisans and retailers which are mutually beneficial. This observation is based upon the realization that some retail establishments will be willing to embrace marketing strategies which dovetail with the needs of traditional people.

In "Folk Art As Non-Discountable Merchandise" (Walle n.d.) I have argued that the uniqueness and scarcity of authentic folk arts typically complement the marketing strategies of specialty shops and department stores which prefer product lines which are "exclusive" and cannot be easily duplicated.

Today, discount stores offer "no frill" retailing schemes which attract customers who are willing to sacrifice product characteristics such as exclusiveness of merchandise in order to buy merchandise at "bottom dollar." Facing such competition, specialty shops and department stores must either surrender these sales to others or enter the price-war fray. Both options are unattractive.

An attractive strategy for such retailers is to offer products which are non-discountable. Such goods can be sold at high prices and fit in with the image and strategy of such institutions.

Authentic folk arts are examples of non-discountable merchandise. They are labor intensive. They are in short supply. Their normal means of production does not allow for mass production/mass marketing at a level which would be attractive to discount stores and moderately priced chains.

To successfully market these folk arts, however, careful attention must be given to the socio-cultural milieu within which such goods are created as well as the long term impact of the marketing relationships. The trick is to forge a viable set of business relationships which motivate folk producers without disrupting their world. A significant component of this motivation is to make the folk arts attractive enough so that young people will have an incentive to master traditional skills. The devolution which often accompanies the commercialization of crafts poses a serious threat; quality must be maintained and sales targets must be calculated over long periods of time. Following this strategy helps insure that the folk tradition will not degenerate into a short term fad exploitable by discount stores. By keeping quality up and production rather low, folk art can be sold to future generations of connoisseurs which can provide a durable and dependable source of income for the folk and for the retailer. Simultaneously, such a marketing approach will be least disruptive to the traditional cultures from which such goods derive and appeal to the enlightened self-interest of a specific type of retail establishment.

In short, folk arts constitute an area where a specific kind of retailer must subordinate the marketing concept to accommodate production considerations; the social impact which various types of marketing and production will have must be considered. Folklorists encouraging such strategies can help preserve the retailer's ability to market a line of high priced, non-discountable goods while helping the folk. Significantly, if department stores and specialty shops impinge too hard upon the styles, colors, and means of production, they could

literally "kill the goose that laid the golden egg." By affirming this fact, folklorists may be able to channel the demands of merchandisers in directions which reap long-term benefits for traditional artisans.

The thrust of this example is that professional "buyers" for department and specialty shops might be convinced to make decisions which mitigate economic intervention. To accomplish this end, however, folklorists must approach the appropriate type of merchandiser and adequately explain why a "cultural conservationist" approach is to everyone's benefit. Folklorists cannot accomplish these goals by withdrawing their attention and participation.

In addition, folklorists must act to prevent the current populatiry of traditional crafts from emerging as merely a temporary fad or fashion. And if this current popularity does prove to be a short-term phenomenon, we must deal with that reality and mitigate its impact upon the folk. Only by working with private business people can we take steps to help insure that traditional craftspeople will not be left "high and dry" if and when the "country look" vogue ends.

In this regard, M. L. Brimo and I (Walle and Brimo 1984) have argued that the current popularity of traditional workmanship might not be long lived. If this is true, traditional people may initially become dependent on a livelihood based on the present marketability of their wares only to have the rug pulled out from under them as the fickle tastes of our mass culture change yet again. If this occurs, traditional people (who become overly dependent upon such revenues) can be terribly hurt. As suggested, positioning folk art as a connoisseur good instead of being a fashion commodity can serve to stabilize demand and, in the process, prevent economic catastrophe in the long run. Such marketing strategies must be discussed and folklorists must find ways of coordinating the marketing plans of specific retailers with the needs of traditional people. We, as practitioner folklorists, can serve in this way only if we are active participants in the marketing process.

These examples, of course, barely begin to demonstrate how specific marketing strategies and practices can be discussed as relatively beneficial and non-disruptive to traditional people. In addition, I have suggested that marketing and marketing institutions are not monolithic. Different types of retailing establishments (such as department stores vs. discount houses), for example, embrace different merchandising strategies. Folklorists can advise traditional people to form alliances with institutions which provide the best long term "deal." Much more work in this area needs to be done.

In summary, marketing and other disruptive social contact between traditional people and mass culture can and should be mitigated by practitioner folklorists. Our discipline will limit itself only by defining itself as a "public sector" discipline. Other roles such as in social impact assessment and interfacing between the folk and private enterprise

are legitimate options. Embracing these new roles, however, must be done with care lest we overtly or covertly act in ways which prove inappropriate.

Conclusion

We all believe that the marketing of traditional arts (craftsmanship and performance) should function to the mutual benefit of all concerned. The analysis of various interactions between folk and the larger culture, however, indicates that hidden costs sometimes exist which are not anticipated and/or are not immediately visible. Tragedies such as the social separation syndrome are examples of such hidden costs. The whole thrust of modern marketing, furthermore, is so weighted toward serving the needs of customers/consumers that the well-being of producers is often ignored. This does not mean that marketing selfishly ignores the needs of producers, but merely that marketing theory and practice does not direct attention in this direction.

Such blind spots in contemporary marketing theory and practice create a niche which must be filled if the best interests of traditional people are to be served. Folklorists are one group of professionals vying to fill this niche. Other professions (such as applied anthropology) would welcome such assignments and are prepared to do such work.

Folklore, happily, possesses a set of skills which uniquely qualifies it for such assignments. To seize these opportunities, however, folklorists must gain a greater understanding of modern marketing methods and establish a means of evaluating the appropriateness or inappropriateness of particular marketing opportunities. Folklorists, furthermore, must consciously foster self-determinism while encouraging traditional people to evaluate opportunities in a long-term perspective.

Coming to grips with such responsibilities will allow folklorists to work in new and exciting areas. To back away from this work may result in traditional people not having the advice, counsel, and advocacy they require.

NOTES

1 As any other profession/discipline, "Business" is divided into a variety of subdisciplines each of which is convinced of its own importance. Four specific subdisciplines are Management, Finance, Accounting, and Marketing. Marketing, along with some "people related" management professions, tends to be the most humanistic, non rigorous, and cross disciplinary of the business fields. As is often the case, there is considerable infighting and jockeying for position of favorable pecking order among those subdisciplines.

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Review

Religious Folk Art in America: Reflections of Faith. C. Kurt Dewhurst, Betty MacDowell and Marsha MacDowell. New York: E. P. Dutton, Inc., 1983. (x + 163 pp.; preface, epilogue, selected bibliographies, index; 216 illus. + 5 color plates). $16.95 paper, $29.95 cloth.

In late 1983 a publicity brochure announced the following:

> To enhance the relationship between the museum object and the living culture, the Museum of American Folk Art [New York City] has planned a series of educational events in conjunction with the exhibition *Reflections of Faith: Religious Folk Art in America.* This is the first national exhibition to explore America's rich heritage of the folk artist's spiritual inspirations.

What was to follow was an exciting variety of public presentations, beginning with the exhibition itself at the IBM Gallery of Science and Art at Madison Avenue and 56th Street and culminating in mid-January 1984 with a symposium, performances by folk artists, and on-site visits and tours to a variety of locations in New York. The exhibition, which was curated by C. Kurt Dewhurst and Marsha MacDowell, both from the Museum at Michigan State University, included over 100 examples of eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth century paintings, textiles, sculptures and decorative arts. It received very positive comments from the thousands of visitors to see it in New York.

The three-day symposium brought together an impressive group of scholars whose papers addressed a variety of important issues: the private and public expression of religious folk culture and its effects on the environment; the nature of the religious artifact in American life and the transformation of everyday objects into sacred objects; the meaning of religious art objects and identity including ethnic, communal and political aspects; and, the iconography of objects which provide tangible and constant reminders of faith and stimuli for religious activity. The papers covered such topics as Feasts and Processions in the Urban Environment; The Dynamics of Folk Art in Black Religious Drama; Santos of Puerto Rico; Chinese Paper Gods; Religious and Secular Values on Gravestones; and Religion on the Road: Highway Evangelism.

During the same period as the symposium, the museum also sponsored lecture/demonstrations about Voodoo influences on

Haitian dance; Cuban, Puerto Rican, and black religious folk music; a performance by the Manteo Sicilian Marionette Theatre, and more. Finally, tours and visits to a black gospel music service in Brooklyn, to the gravestone sculpture in Trinity Churchyard, to ethnic restaurants and bakeries on the Lower East Side, and to see the stonecutting still going on at the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine completed this special series of events.

The program was excellent and the Museum of American Folk Art should be commended for sponsoring it. In fact, that museum and other museums and galleries presenting folk art exhibitions should be encouraged to do likewise with future projects. But, for all their value to the audiences who actually experienced them, the exhibition, the performances, tours, and the symposium were short lived. It has traditionally been publications, especially the exhibition catalogue, from such endeavors which have become the permanent, lasting record of "the happening." Such books, if done right, can be strong and complete in both visual and interpretive content and make significant contributions to our knowledge of the subject. Fortunately for all of us, *Religious Folk Art in America* does all of these things very well. Much more than the usual exhibition catalogue (for this is really a book, without checklists or gallery guides), it is a sweeping survey of issues, periods and aesthetic expressions.

In their preface, C. Kurt Dewhurst, Betty MacDowell, and Marsha MacDowell set out on the ambitious task of establishing guidelines for selection which deal with the several approaches to folk art these days, aesthetic as well as ethnographic. Since the chief interest for which much of the constituency of the Museum of American Folk Art stands has been in folk art as Art, the authors seek to deal with the "canon of folk art" — paintings, sculpture, textiles, etc. — as well as chronological periods. But the book really centers on interpreting the material within the many religious and social contexts of folk cultures to be found in America with, as they state in the preface, "an overriding concern for a synthesis of religious meaning and religious art." Altogether that is a difficult assignment to undertake. In the three chapters and the extensive captions of the many illustrations, however, one should gain a good general overview of the folk traditions and historical currents that affect the output of religious folk art in America from the eighteenth century to the present.

Chapter One, "Faith Made Perfect", discusses the origins of religious folk art in America and the interplay of religion and art. Contrary to the position generally taken in most museum exhibitions of folk art or of many collectors, the authors include Native American materials as "folk." (Conventionally, except for anthropologists who have long studied such materials, the material culture of Indians has been treated as pre-literate, pre-contact, and primitive by the folk art

world.) Therefore, a painted Pawnee ceremonial drum, a Hopi kachina, a Chippewa strawberry basket, an Arapaho Ghost Dance shirt, and an Iroquois (Seneca) mask are among the objects included, for their inherent religious meanings in their communities at the time of their creation, or their use in ceremonies. The influence of Christianity on Native American cultures is also evident in such cross-cultural examples as a Potawotami crucifix, an Ottawa nativity scene, and an interesting carved wood maple sugar mold, decorated with such Roman Catholic imagery as crosses and a Sacred Heart.

The origins of which the authors write also include the Spanish Catholic influence in the Southwest, and particularly the role of the *Santeros* or religious artists who created *retablos* (painted panels or altar screens) and *bultos* (carved religious figures). These *santeros*, who "occupied a prescribed place in the folklife of their local communities," created some of the most distinctive and powerful of folk art objects in America, represented in the book by Penitente death carts and various images of saints. The artistic tradition still lives on in some New Mexican families and contemporary examples are included.

The third and final influence on early religious art explored in this chapter is the New England Puritan experience. These things, more familiar to the early collectors and exhibitors of folk art, include needlework pictures of Old Testament subjects like Adam and Eve and Joab slaying Absalom and some of the well-known New England gravemarkers with death's head, cherub, hourglass and Father Time motifs, to list a few. Such images are interpreted as visual representations of Puritan philosophy and community taste.

"All to the Glory of God," the second chapter, examines the rich and fascinating nineteenth century in American life, when significant and rapid intellectual and social change made life so interesting and our people so diverse. The folklorist/historian can find a heyday with the many cultural expressions to surface in that era. The authors see the period as an expansion of religious life in America: an increased use of evangelistic practices, a strengthening of women's roles within religious structures, the rise of sectarian movements, a redistribution of denominational memberships, and a steady influx of immigrants and their religious customs. This chapter explores ways in which these changes affected artistic expressions of the spirit in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Because of the dynamics of these many folk cultures coming together during the period and because of the several major themes undertaken by the authors, this chapter is perhaps the highlight for folklorists. It begins with the continuing Protestant influence shown in moral lessons on samplers, mourning pictures, and religious scenes (often derived from popular prints); it continues with artifacts like panorama pictures and show wagons used by evangelists for visual

aids in preaching their messages to the masses. Then, through a series of brief discussions, the roles of numerous groups and of their folk art is examined: the Pennsylvania Germans' illuminations with sacred (and secular) motifs in *fraktur* on baptismal and marriage certificates, on ironwork, and on painted furniture; Afro-American religious expressions in such forms as devil or face jugs, graveyard decorations, voodoo figures and quilts. The Shakers, Zoarites, Mormons, and some other new sects founded in the nineteenth century had their own iconography and artistic inspirations, so they too are included. The chapter makes an effort to include some traditions continuing into the late twentieth century, especially with the photographs of a San Gennaro festival, a Slovenian family in traditional costumes on Palm Sunday, and Greek votive offerings in a Detroit home.

The third and final chapter, "In Their Craft is Their Prayer," is a sharp departure from the first two. While the authors have examined group values and aesthetics in the earlier chapters, this chapter explores "twentieth century artists and certain nineteenth century artists independent and not restricted by aesthetic traditions of particular people." It is also a study of "the religious iconography of American folk cultures." First they present a collection of scenes based on scriptural or traditional sources, such as the Garden of Eden, the Peaceable Kingdom, and Noah's Ark from the Old Testament and nativity scenes, Christ and the disciples, and crucifixions from the New Testament. They range from very early examples to very contemporary. Then there are documentations of religious life, like paintings or carvings of camp meetings, a black funeral, a family seder, and a Catholic funeral procession. Next is a discussion of the personal religious visions of some artists — many of them twentieth century examples — who have created in a variety of media. Among them are James Hampton, Sister Gertrude Morgan, Patrick J. Sullivan, and the Rev. Howard Finster, all of whom have been shown and written about extensively in the gallery and museum world of late. And finally some iconography — as diverse as the Angel Gabriel and the Hand of God in nineteenth century decorative arts, *pysanki* decorations and urban graffiti in twentieth century settings — sometimes incorporated into the work of folk artists. The chapter concludes with a brief commentary on "continuity, change, and cultural context" of religious folk art expressions.

Religious Folk Art in America is a good book, certainly the most comprehensive and interpretive to date. Since it is both an exhibition catalogue and a monograph, it attempts to do many things. As a survey it is very representative, including materials like Native American ceremonial objects and photographs of contemporary ethnic/religious festival rituals.

The most notable exception is the relative paucity of traditional

Jewish religious art, discussion of which is limited to one terse paragraph on page 44: "Within the Jewish culture, the use of artifacts within a religious context is not as widespread as in other religious groups . . . The construction of a succoth, the decoration of a Torah binder, and the cutting of a paper message are all examples of the way in which art intersects the Jewish experience." It is interesting to note that within a year after this exhibition and book, another major exhibition and catalogue also under the sponsorship of the Museum of American Folk Art entitled *The Jewish Heritage in American Folk Art* appeared. Each was nearly as large as this comprehensive religious folk art exhibition and book produced only a year before. One suspects less a curatorial oversight by Dewhurst and the MacDowells than a museum decision for one not to interfere with the other.

The earlier-discussed intent of the book to deal with all periods, all religious folk cultures, and all of the canon of folk art generally succeeds. Chapters One and Two are especially good as surveys of social changes and the many folk art expressions to be traced chronologically until the end of the nineteenth century. Chapter Three is more problematic, for it may attempt to accomplish too much. Most troubling is the sudden shift to twentieth century art and artists, especially as individual artists are featured, unlike the emphases of the previous chapters. Many of them are idiosyncratic and visionary, with few apparent links to either traditional or popular cultural influences made so clear in the examples presented in the first part of the book. It is almost as if folk culture and group religious influences had stopped around the turn of the century, a proposition not corroborated in this book or in any others. True, many of the contemporary folk artists so popular with collectors and art historians who appreciate the uniqueness of their work are a problem for the folklorist's perspective on folk art. Yet the work of some — like Simon Rodia and his Watts Towers or Elijah Pierce and his religious scenes in wood carvings — may, upon close scrutiny, be closely linked to folk traditions. In fact, of these two examples there are currently scholarly studies being done which may show exciting connections between their art and their religious traditions. Isn't it possible that others, like the Rev. Howard Finster or Sister Gertrude Morgan, could be expressing their communities' religious values and group tastes in their work as well? A clearer transition or the exclusion of some materials might have made a stronger case.

The book is profusely illustrated with good photographs and succinct but generally helpful captions. One always wants more information about chosen pieces, but sadly enough, many museum and collector's records are painfully short on provenance and other information. One serious fault in the book is the layout of photographs, with only a very few scattered through the chaper texts

and then large numbers of continuous pages of photographs following each chapter (13 pages at the end of Chapter One, 30 after Chapter Two, and 45 after Chapter Three). While figures are numbered and keyed to the text, and photographs were generally arranged in the order of the discussion in the text, one still must constantly flip pages to examine the work in question. What appears to have been a convenience for the layout artist is a major inconvenience for the reader.

All told, however, the Museum of American Folk Art, Kurt Dewhurst, and Marsha and Betty MacDowell are all to be congratulated for this entire project, and particularly for the contribution that this book makes. It is both a showcase of stunning religious folk art in America and a good discourse on the relationship of that art to the daily lives of ordinary people.

Varick A. Chittenden

120

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NEW YORK FOLKLORE

Editorial Policy and Information for Contributors

Manuscripts submitted to the Editor should represent original contributions to folklore studies. While maintaining an emphasis on the folklore of New York State, the Editor welcomes material based on the folklore of any area of the world. Articles contributing to the theory, methodology, and geography of folklore are especially welcome, but the journal also publishes purely descriptive articles in the ethnography of folklore, and provides a home for "orphan" tales, narratives, songs, etc. Contributors of the latter are urged to provide as much contextual information as possible. Such material, as well as short articles, comments, research reports, etc., may be published as Folklore Notes; requests for assistance in specific research projects may be published as Queries.

Articles normally should not exceed 7,500 words. A detailed Style Guide and statement of Editorial Policy appears in Vol. X, Nos. 1-2, Winter-Spring 1984; or is available from the Editor. All material should be typed double-spaced on opaque white non-erasable paper. A separately-typed abstract of about 75 words should accompany each Article or item intended as a Note. Tables should appear separately from the text, numbered consecutively. The original and two copies of all textual and tabular material should be submitted. Text figures (drawings, charts, maps, photographs) should be clean and ready for publication. The original ms. and text figures will be returned if accompanied by sufficient first-class postage.